



Thin Blue Line

Thousands Gather at Wake for Slain New York Officer

New York Police Department personnel line up to pay their respects at the wake of a colleague, Rafael Ramos, at Christ Tabernacle Church in the Glendale neighborhood of New York, Dec. 26, 2014. Ramos and his patrol partner, Wenjain Liu, were fatally shot on Saturday by a man who had announced his intent to target officers in retaliation for the recent deaths of unarmed black men.

(Andrew Renneisen/The New York Times)

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Thousands Gather at Wake for Slain New York Officer

MIREYA NAVARRO

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NEW YORK - At Christ Tabernacle, a megachurch in the Glendale neighborhood of Queens with thousands of members, an usher known as Ralph had no small task come Sundays. Dressed in a suit, he helped mothers handle baby carriages, steered the elderly to the elevator and personified the "little" in a self-described "big little church" by making churchgoers feel at home.

"He had an infectious smile," said the Rev. Ralph Castillo, one of the church's 18 pastors. "When I think of Ralph I think of his smile and his consistency. He didn't have to be there. This is something he chose to do. He was faithful and consistent."

On Friday, thousands of people would walk through the doors of that same church to mourn Ralph, as Officer Rafael Ramos was known. Ramos, 40, was one of two police officers killed Dec. 20 as they sat in their squad car in Brooklyn, shot by an assassin targeting police. Services for his partner, Wenjian Liu, 32, are being delayed until members of his family can make arrangements to travel from their home in China.

The wake and memorial service drew mourners from all corners of the city - friends and strangers alike - as well as city and police department officials who put aside their divisions momentarily to pay their respects to "a humble man" willing to help in any capacity, as a statement posted on the Christ Tabernacle website described Ramos.

"This is a tragic loss for us as a church, but we are committed to Maritza, Jaden and Justin to give them what Ralph gave us week in and week out," the statement said, referring to Ramos' wife and two sons. A group of about 15 mourners, some carrying a single white rose, already had lined up by the church's entrance before noon, waiting to go in for the viewing, which began at 2 p.m. A giant Christmas

wreath with festive ornaments decorated the brick building's front. Church officials said only the family and members of the New York Police Department would be inside the church for the 7 p.m. memorial service. But they said they planned to set up several jumbo screens at a nearby gas station and other spots in the area so the expected large crowds could watch the service. The funeral is scheduled for Saturday at 10 a.m.

"Today we weep with the Ramos family, the New York Police Department and the nation as we mourn the loss of our dear brother," Castillo said to media standing outside the church. "He was a gift to our church." Neighbors milled around the church. Friends who lived five blocks away, Delia Ramos, 73, and Sal Conti, 72, said they came to pay their respects even if they feared the event could turn violent.

"We just had breakfast at the diner, and the officers there all had bullet-proof vests," Conti said. "They can't even relax. They have to worry somebody will shoot them. It's a shame."

Delia Ramos said: "I hope that things get better between the community and the police. All this animosity is a horror."

Police officers were visible on rooftops and walking with dogs on the street. Several hundred officers lined up through the open space of a Sunoco gas station near the church waiting to go inside.

The hearse from Morton Funeral Home arrived shortly after noon. All those in uniform were called to attention and saluted the coffin as it was brought into the church.

Among those in attendance was Capt. Sergio Centa, Rafael Ramos' commander in the 84th Precinct. He said the officer volunteered for shifts, went about his business quietly and kept Bible study books in his locker.



High ranking police officials line up outside the church to pay respects at the wake of Officer Rafael Ramos, at Christ Tabernacle Church in New York, Dec. 26, 2014. Ramos and his partner, Wenjian Liu, were fatally shot on Saturday by a man who had announced his intent to target officers in retaliation for the recent deaths of unarmed black men.

(Andrew Renneisen/The New York Times)

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Capacity crowds pack screenings of 'The Interview'

HILLEL ITALIE

AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Critics and early viewers agree that "The Interview" is less than a masterpiece. But thanks to threats from hackers that nearly derailed its release, it has become an event. Hundreds of theaters, from The Edge 8 in Greenville, Alabama, to Michael Moore's Bijou by the Bay in Traverse City, Michigan, made special holiday arrangements for the Seth Rogen-James Franco comedy depicting the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Sony Pictures had initially called off the release after major theater chains dropped the movie that was to have opened on as

many as 3,000 screens.

But with President Obama among others criticizing the decision, Sony officials changed their minds.

"The Interview" became available on a variety of digital platforms Wednesday afternoon, including Google Play, YouTube Movies, Microsoft's Xbox Video and a separate Sony website. Meanwhile, Sony and independent theaters agreed to release it in over 300 venues on Christmas.

"We are taking a stand for freedom," said theater manager Lee Peterson of the Cinema Village East in Manhattan, where most of Thursday's seven screenings had sold out by early afternoon. "We want to show the world that Ameri-



Bernard Denney takes a selfie with his girlfriend Maho Tanaka, left, in front of the Cinefamily at Silent Movie Theater in Los Angeles on Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014 prior to attending the movie "The Interview." The film's Christmas Day release was canceled by Sony after threats of violence by hackers linked to North Korea, but the release was reinstated in some independent theaters and through a variety of digital platforms.

(AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

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cans will not be told what we can or cannot watch. Personally, I am not afraid." At Atlanta's Plaza Theater, a sell-out crowd Thursday hailed the film's release, washing down popcorn with beer and cocktails and uniting for a boisterous sing-along of "God Bless America" before the opening credits.

"This is way more fun than it would have been," said Jim Kelley of Atlanta, who waited outside with his daughter, Shannon. The elder Kelley added, with mocking sarcasm, "This is almost dangerous, like we're living life on the edge."

Some venues showing "The Interview" were more likely to feature documentaries about North Korea than a low-brow comedy about it. At the Jean Cocteau Cinema in Santa Fe, New Mexico, owned by "Game of Thrones" author George RR Martin, the schedule also includes the Spanish art-house release "Flamenco," the locally made "The Twi-

light Angel" and an Italian film festival. The Film Society of Lincoln Center, which begins screening "The Interview" on Friday, will soon be hosting a tribute to "Force Majeure" director Ruben Ostlund of Sweden and a documentary about the late Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer. The back story of "The Interview" has itself played out like a Hollywood satire, in which a cartoonish farce distracts from some of the holiday season's most prestigious films: "Selma," the drama about the 1965 civil rights march; Angelina Jolie's adaptation of the best-selling World War II story "Unbroken"; and the all-star, big-screen version of Stephen Sondheim's "Into the Woods."

Security was light at many theaters, with the occasional police officer on hand. The possibility of violence was taken more seriously by the movie industry than by government officials. □

Immigrants get warning on seeking driver's licenses

AMY TAXIN

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — While tens of thousands of immigrants living in the United States illegally are preparing to apply for a long-sought driver's license in California starting Jan. 2, others are being urged to think twice.

Immigrant advocates say the vast majority should be able to get licenses without trouble, but they want anyone who previously obtained a driver's license under a false name or someone else's Social Security number to speak first with a lawyer, fearing a new application could trigger a fraud investigation.

The same applies to immigrants with a prior deportation order or criminal record because federal immigration officials and law enforcement can access Department of Motor Vehicles data during an investigation.

The advice isn't meant to frighten immigrants from seeking licenses that are meant to make their lives easier — especially because many already risk getting ticketed simply by driving to work or taking their children to school.

"For the vast majority of people, getting a license is a good decision," said Alison Kamhi, staff attorney at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. "At the same time, I think it is important people are aware there is some risk."

The nation's most populous state is preparing to start issuing driver's licenses to

immigrants in the country illegally in a bid to make the roads safer and ease fears for more than a million people. California's program eclipses the scope and scale of those approved in nine other states, including Nevada, Colorado and Illinois.

California expects 1.4 million people to apply for the licenses — which include a distinct marking from those issued to U.S. citizens and residents — over the next three years. The number of people making license appointments more than doubled to 379,000 during the first two weeks immigrants were allowed to sign up.

Immigrant advocates said they don't foresee major problems with the rollout of the program because the state has had more than a year to prepare and an ample budget — \$141 million spanning three years. In Nevada, about 90 percent of immigrants failed the required written test during the first few weeks a driver authorization card was offered this year because they were not prepared. In Colorado, the state had no startup funding to issue licenses this year and couldn't keep pace with demand, leading to monthslong waits.

Jonathan Blazer, advocacy and policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, said he expects California to license as many immigrants in the country illegally as the nine other states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico combined.



California Highway Patrol officers Armando Garcia, right, and Ray Patton explain to immigrants the process of getting a drivers license during an information session at the Mexican Consulate, in San Diego. California is gearing up to start issuing driver's licenses to immigrants in the country illegally in a bid to make the roads safer that could also give more than a million people access to state-issued identification.

(AP Photo/Lenny Ignelzi)

"If California is not able to do this right with the resources it put into this, other states will take notice," Blazer said.

Critics have voiced security concerns and questioned the ability of state officials to verify immigrants' identities.

Like other applicants, im-

migrants will need to prove their identity and residency in the state. Those who don't have a passport or consular identification card on a pre-approved list can submit other documents for review by a DMV investigator to see if they qualify.

Mexican consulates and advocacy groups have

been hosting driver's license preparation classes for months. Demand has been high.

"The sooner the better, because it will be safer to drive," said Abel Rivera, a 37-year-old from Mexico. He also hopes to qualify for better insurance coverage. □

4 bodies found in Ohio home where kids visited grandma

WASHINGTON

COURT

HOUSE, Ohio (AP) — An Ohio fire marshal's spokesman says four bodies have been pulled from a burned-out Ohio home where three children were visiting their grandmother. The fire was reported early Friday. Authorities say the single-story house was destroyed.

Sheriff Vernon Stanford said family members were

being informed of what he called "just a tragic, tragic" fire.

He said the children lived nearby and were spending the night with their grandmother so she wouldn't be by herself on Christmas night.

No identifications have been released.

There was no immediate word on what may have caused the blaze. □

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AP-Times Square poll: Feeling optimistic for 2015

EMILY SWANSON
JENNIFER AGIESTA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are closing out 2014 on an optimistic note, according to a new Associated Press-Times Square Alliance poll. Nearly half predict that 2015 will be a better year for them than 2014 was, while only one in 10 think it will be worse. Here's what Americans thought of 2014:

GAINS AT HOME, SLIPS ABROAD

On a personal level, about a third (34 percent) think 2014 was better than 2013, while 15 percent say 2014 was worse, and half see little difference.

Americans are slightly more likely than they were a year ago to believe that the current year was better than the last for the United States— 30 percent say so this year, while 25 percent said so in 2013. On the other hand, Americans are more likely than in the 2013 poll to say this year was worse than last for the world as a whole, with 38 percent saying so now after 30 percent said so a year ago.

THREE STORIES SHARE TOP SPOT

Americans are divided on the most important news event of 2014, with the rise of the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, protests

over the killings of black men including Michael Brown and Eric Garner by

Asked separately to rate the importance of 10 key stories, majorities call the

rising number of states with legal same-sex marriage were deeply important

Football League, is rated forgettable by about half. Events rating as forgettable by a majority of Americans include Taylor Swift going pop, and the marriages of George and Amal Clooney and Kim Kardashian and Kanye West.

POLL NOTES

The AP-Times Square Alliance Poll of 1,017 adults was conducted online Dec. 12-14, using a sample drawn from GfK's probability-based KnowledgePanel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The poll is a cooperative effort between AP and the organizers of the Times Square New Year's Eve Celebration, the Times Square Alliance and Countdown Entertainment. The Alliance is a nonprofit group that seeks to promote Times Square, and Countdown Entertainment represents the owners of One Times Square and the New Year's Eve Ball Drop.

Respondents were first selected randomly using phone or mail survey methods, and later interviewed online. People selected for KnowledgePanel who didn't otherwise have access to the Internet were provided access at no cost to them.



Staffers douse Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam and his wife, Crissy, with cold water on the steps of the state Capitol in Nashville, Tenn. The Haslams were participating in the ice bucket challenge to support research into ALS. Americans are closing out 2014 on an optimistic note, according to a new Associated Press-Times Square Alliance poll. Nearly half predict that 2015 will be a better year for them than 2014 was, while only 1 in 10 think it will be worse. There's room for improvement: Americans give the year gone by a resounding 'meh.'
 (AP Photo/Erik Schelzig)

police officers, and the Ebola outbreak. Each was named by about one in 10 Americans. In a separate Associated Press survey of news directors and editors, the killings of unarmed men by police stand out more clearly as the top story, with 22 of 85 respondents choosing it as the top news, about twice as many as the Islamic State or Ebola stories.

expansion of the Islamic State militant group, the Ebola outbreak and the U.S. midterm elections extremely or very important stories. Nearly half rate immigration as that important, while 43 percent say so of the Brown and Garner stories. Only a third think the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, the situation between Russia and Ukraine, or the

stories.

THE YEAR IN POP CULTURE

Few Americans rate this year's crop of pop culture events as memorable, with one big exception: The death of Robin Williams and the ensuing discussion of mental health issues. About two-thirds call that a memorable event.

Michael Sam becoming the first openly gay player drafted into the National

Obama addresses Afghan war's end on Hawaii Christmas visit

AMY CHOZICK
© 2014 New York Times
HONOLULU - President Barack Obama for the first time used his Christmas Day visit to the troops to talk about the end of America's longest war.

"We've been in continuous war now for over 13 years," Obama told troops gathered in the mess hall at Marine Corps Base Hawaii. "Next week we will be ending our combat mission in Afghanistan."

"Hurrah!" one service

member shouted. Obama continued, "Because of the extraordinary service of the men and women in the armed forces, Afghanistan has a chance to rebuild its own country." The president, with his wife, Michelle, visited service members at the military base, not far from their vacation home in Kailua. It has become an annual tradition for the Obamas, who spend two weeks in Hawaii - where the president spent much

of his childhood - each holiday season. Still, the Afghanistan withdrawal has not been simple. This month, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said the United States would keep roughly 1,000 more troops than originally planned in Afghanistan through early 2015, in part because the NATO force there is not big enough to train the Afghan military. About 5,500 U.S. troops are expected to still be stationed there at the

end of 2015. Michelle Obama, who has made a priority of addressing military families' issues, also thanked the troops in a joint Christmas radio address with her husband. "As our troops continue to transition back home - back to our businesses, our schools, our congregations and our communities - it's up to all of us to serve them as well as they have served us," she said. The Obamas and their daughters, Sasha and

Malia, spent Christmas morning opening presents at home. Later, they joined friends at Bellows Air Force Station in Oahu for some time on the secluded beach there. On Christmas Eve, the president called troops stationed overseas to thank them for their service, White House officials said, and the first lady answered calls from children asking about Santa Claus' location as part of the NORAD Tracks Santa program.

US Financial Front:

In 2014, US economy began shaky, finished strong

JOSH BOAK

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy flexed its old muscles in 2014.

More than five years removed from the Great Recession, worries had taken hold at the start of the year that perhaps the world's largest economy had slid into a semi-permanent funk. But consumers, businesses and investors, after enduring a brutal winter, showed renewed vigor as the year wore on and set the United States apart from much of the world.

Stocks repeatedly set record highs — and did so again Friday, with the Dow Jones industrial average rising modestly to a new peak. Employers were on pace to add nearly 3 million jobs, the most in 15 years. Sinking oil prices cut gasoline costs to their lowest levels since May 2009. Auto sales accelerated. Inflation was a historically low sub-2 percent. The U.S. economy proved it could thrive even as the Federal Reserve ended its bond buying program, which had been intended to aid growth by holding down long-term loan rates. All told, the United States remained insulated from the financial struggles surfacing everywhere from Europe and Latin America to China, Japan and Russia.

So what explained the U.S. economy's resilience this year?

Economists say it largely reflected the delayed benefits of finally mending the damage from the worst downturn in nearly 80 years. Unlike past recoveries that enjoyed comparatively swift rebounds, this one proved agonizingly slow. It took 6½ years to regain all the jobs lost to the recession — 8.7 million — far longer than during previous recoveries.

"It was a healing process from a severe recession and the financial crisis," said Richard Moody, chief economist at Regions Financial, a bank based in Alabama. The healing isn't complete. Wage growth remains lackluster and has barely out-

paced extremely low inflation. Home building has been tepid.

But worries earlier this year that the economy might be trapped indefinitely by sluggish growth have largely faded. Here are the economic highlights of 2014:

— HIRING BOOM

Employers added 2.65 million jobs over the first 11 months of the year, and the unemployment rate sank to 5.8 percent from 6.7 percent. When the government announces the December job data next month, the 2014 job total is expected to be just shy of 3 million — the most since the dot-com era in 1999. Compared with recent years, those gains have been less concentrated in lower-paying industries such as retail, food service and temp agencies.

"We're finally entering that virtuous cycle phase of the expansion" when more jobs lead to higher incomes, which generates more consumer spending and growth, said Brett Ryan, an economist at Deutsche Bank.

Though average wage growth has been modest, the number of people with paychecks — and the ability to spend — has soared. If you exclude the economy's winter-induced 2.1 percent annual contraction in the first quarter of the year, annualized growth has averaged 4.4 percent in four of the past five quarters. That's far above the historic average of roughly 3.2 percent in the decades after World War II.

— STOCKS SURGE

Stocks extended their bullish stampede of nearly six years. The Standard & Poor's 500 index climbed about 13 percent this year, hitting record highs more than 50 times. If you bought the index at a market bottom in March 2009, you've basically tripled your money. Corporate mergers helped drive this year's gains, along with major companies buying up \$400 billion-plus of their own stock.

— OIL PRICES PLUNGE

In a gift for U.S. consum-



Last minute Christmas shoppers are reflected in a store's window as they walk through Chicago's Loop. After enduring a brutal winter, businesses, consumers and investors showed renewed vigor as 2014 wore on and set themselves apart from much of the world. (AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast)

ers, energy got significantly cheaper. Crude oil prices were essentially cut in half from this year's high. The slowing economies in Europe and Asia curbed demand, while production remained steady. The price decline trickled down to gasoline pumps. Average

prices nationwide dropped to \$2.32 a gallon, down roughly a dollar from a year ago, according to AAA. Some of that price slowdown has hurt U.S. oil producers, which must weigh layoffs. But overall, cheaper oil is a positive. Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen

noted that the falling prices resemble a tax cut, generating savings for consumers that can be spent elsewhere to drive economic growth.

— AUTOS SALES UP

Far more Americans splurged on a new car after having held onto aging vehicles during the recession and slow early stages of the recovery. Sales were on track to increase 6 percent this year, with 16.5 million new vehicles on the road, according to Cars.com. That would be the best sales pace since 2006.

— INTEREST RATES DROP

Even as the economy has strengthened — usually a sign that interest rates will rise — it's become easier to borrow. More loans mean more spending and faster growth. Rates have declined even though the Fed ended its program to stimulate growth by buying billions in Treasury and mortgage bonds each month. □

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Tensions in Sweden after 5 are injured in mosque fire

STEPHEN CASTLE

© 2014 New York Times

LONDON - With fears of racially motivated violence on the rise in Europe, political leaders in Sweden on Friday condemned a suspected arson attack at a mosque that injured five people and raised tension in a country where immigration has become a significant political issue.

The fire broke out at the mosque, in a residential area in the town of Eskilstuna, about 70 miles west of Stockholm, on Thursday with 15 to 20 people inside. The country's justice minister, Morgan Johansson, called the suspected arson "disgusting" and told Swedish Radio News that he hoped the culprits would be arrested. Although the motive is still unclear, he added that it was hard to ascribe it to anything other than hatred toward Muslims as a group, and Islam as a religion.

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Sweden's culture minister, told the radio station, "If the details are correct, then it is a direct attack against reli-

gious freedom in our country." The station's website also reported that Prime Minister Stefan Löfven called the attack reprehensible and said more must be done to stop attacks against Muslims and places of worship.

The five injured people were treated for smoke inhalation and cuts. A police spokesman, Lars Franzell, told Reuters that a witness saw someone throw an object through a window of the mosque. No arrests have been made.

Sweden has been one of the most welcoming nations in Europe for refugees, but migration has become a prominent political issue in recent years. The right-wing Sweden Democrats party, which campaigns against immigration, has become the country's third largest and recently voted against the national budget, prompting a government collapse and forcing new elections, set for March.

According to Swedish media reports, black swastikas were painted on the front



Firemen work outside a still smoking cellar mosque in Eskilstuna, Sweden. Five of the twenty at prayer inside were taken to hospital after inhaling smoke when a burning object was hurled through a window, setting fire to the building in the early afternoon.

(AP Photo/Pontus Stenberg)

door of a mosque in Stockholm in January, and in December 2013, right-wingers attacked people participating in an anti-racism demonstration in a suburb of Stockholm, injuring three people.

Across Europe, there are growing worries about a rise in attacks on minori-

ties, including Muslims and Jews.

Figures released in Britain show an increase in anti-Muslim attacks and hate crimes after the killing of a British soldier by two Muslims in a south London street in May 2013.

The Metropolitan Police in London recorded a 45 per-

cent increase in religious hate crimes from April 2012 to April 2014, with the number of offenses rising to 915 from 631.

In May, four people were fatally shot at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. A fire damaged a mosque in Strasbourg, France, in November. □

Israel: Palestinian stabs 2 border police

DANIEL ESTRIN
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian man on Friday stabbed and lightly wounded two Israeli paramilitary border policemen at the entrance to Jerusalem's Old City on Friday, Israeli police said.

The attacker stabbed an officer in the neck, and in an ensuing struggle stabbed another in the arm before fleeing, said police spokeswoman Luba Samri. Police are searching for the attacker. The stabbing took place at the Lion's Gate in east Jerusalem shortly after morning prayers at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, the third most sacred place in Islam. There has been a wave of attacks in Jerusalem amid heightened tensions over the compound, which is considered the holiest site in Judaism because it is where the biblical Hebrew temples stood. Meanwhile, an Israeli hospi-

tal in Jerusalem said it was continuing treatment for a Palestinian boy who was wounded this week during a clash between Israeli border police and Palestinian demonstrators in east Jerusalem.

The 5-year-old boy, Mohammed Obeid, was returning home from kindergarten when a rubber bullet shot by Israeli police struck him in the face, said his grandfather, Ibrahim Obeid. Police spokeswoman Samri said Palestinians threw fire bombs and fireworks at border police, who responded with "riot-dispersal means." She said she did not know if the boy was injured during the incident but that police are investigating.

At the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip on Friday, Israeli troops shot a Palestinian who was climbing on the border fence, the army said. Troops shot him in the lower part of his body and

took him for medical treatment and questioning, the army said.

Israel's supreme court meanwhile ordered authorities to demolish one of the oldest and most contentious Jewish settlement outposts in the West Bank. The court said the hilltop outpost of Amona must be evacuated within two years.

Amona was established in 1995 on private Palestinian land without Israeli government permission. In 2006, Israeli police demolished nine homes at the outpost, setting off clashes pitting settlers and their supporters against police and soldiers. Several dozen trailers have remained. The government put off dismantling the rest of the outpost despite court deadlines. Settlers say they have bought some of the land where the outpost sits, but the Palestinian landowners say some of the sales were fictitious. □



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New Russian military doctrine says NATO top threat

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia identified NATO as the nation's No. 1 military threat and raised the possibility of a broader use of precision conventional weapons to deter foreign aggression under a new military doctrine signed by President Vladimir Putin on Friday. NATO flatly denied it was a threat to Russia, and accused Russia of undermining European security. The new doctrine, which comes amid tensions over Ukraine, reflected the Kremlin's readiness to take a stronger posture in response to what it sees as the U.S.-led efforts to isolate and weaken Russia. The paper maintains the provisions of the previous, 2010 edition of the military doctrine regarding the use of nuclear weapons. It says Russia could use nuclear weapons in retaliation to the use of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction against the country or its allies, and also in the case of aggression involving conventional weapons that "threatens the very existence" of the Russian state. But for the first time, the new doctrine says Russia could use precision weapons "as part of strategic deterrent measures," without spelling out when and how Moscow could resort to them. Examples of precision conventional weapons include ground-to-ground missiles, air- and submarine-launched cruise missiles, guided bombs and artillery shells, among other systems. Among other provisions, the paper mentions the need to protect Russia's interests in the Arctic, where

the global competition for vast oil and rich resources has been heating up as the Arctic ice melts. Russia has relied heavily on its nuclear deterrent and lagged far behind the U.S. and its NATO allies in the development of precision conventional weapons. However, it has recently sped up its military modernization, buying large numbers of new weapons and boosting military drills. NATO has said that a sharp rise in the number of Russian air patrols over the Baltics has put civilian flights at risk. Earlier this month, Russia flexed its muscle by airlifting the state-of-the-art Iskander missiles to its westernmost Kaliningrad exclave bordering NATO members Poland and Lithuania. The missiles were pulled back to their home base after the drills, but the deployment clearly served as a demonstration of the military's readiness to quickly raise the ante in case of crisis. Russia has threatened earlier that it could permanently station the Iskander missiles, which can hit targets up to 480 kilometers (about 300 miles) away with high precision, in retaliation to U.S.-led NATO missile defense plans. Iskander missiles can be fitted with a nuclear or conventional warhead. On Friday, the military successfully test-fired the RS-24 Yars intercontinental ballistic missile from the Plesetsk launchpad in northwestern Russia. The 29-page doctrine is a stand-alone document outlining top threats to Russia's security and possible responses. The current edition is the third since Putin was first elected in 2000. The doctrine placed "a

buildup of NATO military potential and its empowerment with global functions implemented in violation

of international law, the expansion of NATO's military infrastructure to the Russian borders" on top of military

threats to Russia.

It stressed that that the deployment of foreign military forces on the territory of Russia's neighbors could be used for "political and military pressure." NATO spokeswoman Oana Lungescu responded by saying in a statement that the alliance "poses no threat to Russia or to any nation." "Any steps taken by NATO to ensure the security of its members are clearly defensive in nature, proportionate and in compliance with international law," she said. "In fact, it is Russia's actions, including currently in Ukraine, which are breaking international law and undermining European security." □



Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev speaks during a presentation of his new book "After Kremlin" in a book store in Moscow, Russia, Friday, Dec. 26, 2014. Gorbachev criticized the West for the latest tensions with Russia, saying that Russian President Vladimir Putin was responding to Western moves.
(AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko)

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South Korea, US, Japan to share intel on North Korea



A North Korea's mock Scud-B missile, center, and other South Korean missiles are display at Korea War Memorial Museum in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, Dec. 26, 2014. South Korea, the U.S. and Japan will sign their first-ever trilateral intelligence-sharing pact next week to better cope with North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile threats, Seoul officials said Friday.

(AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon)

HYUNG-JIN KIM

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

South Korea, the U.S. and Japan will sign their first joint intelligence-sharing pact next week to better cope with North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile threats, officials said Friday. The U.S. has separate, bilateral intelligence-sharing agreements with South Korea and Japan, both American allies which are hosts to tens of thousands of U.S. troops.

But Seoul and Tokyo don't have such bilateral pacts, partly a result of long-running history disputes stemming from Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945. In 2012, the two almost forged an intelligence-sharing pact, but its signing was scrapped at the last minute following a backlash in South Korea. Under the latest initiative, South Korea and Japan would share intelligence only on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs via the U.S., according to a statement from Seoul's Defense Ministry.

The pact would enable the three countries to swiftly respond to any North Korean provocation at a time when its threats are grow-

ing following a third nuclear test in February 2013, the statement said. The use of Japanese intelligence assets would boost surveillance on North Korea, it said.

South Korean officials say the North is believed to have made progress in manufacturing nuclear warheads that are small and light enough to be placed on a missile capable of reaching the U.S. North Korea conducted its first bomb test in 2006, followed by another in 2009.

The formal signing of the pact by the South Korean vice defense minister and his U.S. and Japanese counterparts will take place Monday, according to South Korean defense officials. The Korean Peninsula was divided into a U.S.-backed South Korea and a Soviet-supported, socialist North Korea at the end of the Japanese occupation. The two Koreas fought a devastating three-year war in the early 1950, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

In October, troops of the rival Koreas exchanged gunfire along their heavily fortified border twice, though no casualties were reported. □



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FARC says it has freed soldier

A. RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Latin America's oldest and strongest rebel group says it has freed a soldier who was captured earlier this month.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia issued a statement Friday saying it had released Carlos Becerra Ojeda. The statement said Becerra was handed over to representatives of the International

Red Cross and Cuba and Norway, two countries that have hosted peace talks between the rebels and the government since they began in the fall of 2012.

The rebels announced a unilateral cease-fire last week as a goodwill gesture, but the government has rejected a bilateral truce to the more-than-50-year-old conflict, saying it could help the rebels regroup after a decade of heavy battlefield losses. □

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Haiti politician nominated for prime minister

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)

— A former mayor of Port-au-Prince and presidential candidate was nominated Thursday to be the next prime minister amid an ongoing standoff with parliament that has stalled legislative elections.

Evans Paul was named to run the day-to-day affairs of the government by President Michel Martelly. He would replace Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe, who resigned under pressure Dec. 14 along with his Cabinet. An interim prime minister, Florence Duperval Guillaume, was appointed Sunday.

Martelly nominees have struggled to gain approval from the Senate and Chamber of Deputies in the past but a statement from the president said Paul had been selected in consultation with legislative lawmakers.

He could automatically become prime minister if he is not approved by Jan. 12, when the terms of all members of both houses expire and the president can rule by decree.

Paul is an established political figure in Haiti who served as mayor in 1990 and ran for president in a crowded field in 2006.

Lamothe held the post for 31 months, the longest anyone has held the prime minister post in Haitian history. A presidential commission had called for his resignation, among other steps, to resolve an ongoing stalemate over legislative elections that sparked violent protests in the capital. Martelly was supposed to call elections in 2011 for a majority of Senate seats, the entire Chamber of Deputies and local offices. □

Third priest killed in southern Mexico

MARK STEVENSON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP)

— A priest was found dead of a gunshot wound to the head, his diocese said Friday, marking the latest in series of abductions, attacks and highway robberies against Roman Catholic clerics in an area of southern Guerrero state dominated by drug cartels.

Rev. Gregorio Lopez Gorostieta is the third Catholic priest to have been killed in the region this year, and the first to die since the federal government launched a special, stepped-up security operation in the area following the disappearance of 43 teachers' college students three months ago. The motive in Lopez Gorostieta's killing remains unclear; Bishop Maximino Martinez said a group had been seen lurking around the seminary where the priest taught on the outskirts of Ciudad Altamirano, Guerrero, on Sunday and Monday. Lopez Gorostieta was apparently kidnapped by the gang early Monday; his truck was found abandoned two days later. "This is another priest added to those who have died for their love of Christ," Bishop Martinez said. "Enough already of so much pain, of so many murders. Enough

already of so much crime. Enough extortions."

That was an apparent reference to the "protection payments" that the local drug gang, the Knights

Mendoza Zaragoza said gangs have also demanded protection payments from parish priests in the nearby resort city of Acapulco, Lopez Gorostieta

emonies.

"At times, if they ask for a baptism and you don't do it, they start to threaten you," Martinez said. "They want a marriage, or a bless-



A monument in honor of Mexico's former President Lázaro Cárdenas stands along a highway between Arcelia and Ciudad Altamirano near the state border of Guerrero and Michoacan, Mexico. The bishop of the diocese in Ciudad Altamirano said Friday, Dec. 26 that the Rev. Gregorio Lopez Gorostieta was found dead with a gunshot wound to the head, near this statue, on Christmas Day. Gorostieta disappeared on Monday from the seminary in the city where he taught. (AP Photo/Christian Palma)

Templar, demand from business owners in Ciudad Altamirano. One business owner, who did not want to be named for fear of reprisals, said his family had been forced to pay thousands of pesos (dollars) each year to the gang for the right to operate a pharmacy. While the Rev. Jesus

didn't have a parish or collect tithes. But Bishop Martinez said there could be other motives: Priests have received threats when they refuse to perform quickie marriages or baptisms for drug gang members. The church normally requires extensive paperwork before performing such cer-

ing" for a car or a home, he said, and won't take "no" for an answer.

The Mexican Council of Bishops issued a statement saying "we demand authorities clear up this and so many other crimes that have caused pain in so many homes, and ensure that it is punished." □

Puerto Rico:

Police hits 2 US tourists with motorcycle

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— A Puerto Rico police officer assigned to protect the U.S. territory's governor accidentally ran over two American tourists, authorities said Friday.

Police said agent Orlando Rodriguez hit the elderly couple with a Harley Davidson motorcycle late Thursday as they crossed a

poorly lit street in the capital of San Juan. Authorities identified the couple as 78-year-old Robert Hedley and 64-year-old Harriet Power of Pennsylvania. Public records show they live in Bala Cynwyd, in suburban Philadelphia.

Both are theater professors. Hedley teaches at Temple University and Power at

Villanova University, according to Peter Reynolds, head of musical theater at Temple University. Both universities are in Pennsylvania. Police said Hedley has a hip fracture and his wife has a pelvis fracture. Both also have head injuries but are expected to recover. Authorities said Rodriguez tested negative for alcohol

in a breathalyzer test.

An investigation of the accident is underway. Jorge Hernandez, director of the police department's traffic division, said Rodriguez apparently swerved to avoid the couple but they ran in the same direction.

Hernandez said the couple arrived in Puerto Rico on Christmas Eve. □

China offers to help electricity-starved Nepal

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP) — China said Friday that it would help Nepal develop its power industry to alleviate severe electricity outages that can last up to 12 hours a day in the Himalayan nation, where Beijing is trying to increase influence and investment. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said his country would provide funding and human resources to train

Nepalese professionals in the hydropower and other sectors. Wang spoke to reporters during his three-day visit to Nepal, which ends Saturday. Nepal is trying to woo investment from its giant neighbors China and India. New Delhi recently offered billions of dollars in both investments and development grants. China's state-backed

Three Gorges International Corp. is negotiating with Nepal over construction of a \$1.6 billion power plant over the Seti River in western Nepal that can generate 750 megawatts of electricity. "Nepal has power shortages and electricity is essential for Nepal's efforts to industrialize, to create more jobs, to build its capacity in independent develop-

ment and to raise quality of lives of its people," Wang told reporters in Katmandu, Nepal's capital. He said China could assist Nepal in a variety of sectors, including agriculture, infrastructure, science and technology, tourism, security and law enforcement. Wang said China and Nepal have some common security needs and that they need to work togeth-

er to crack down on "illegal border crossing and transnational crime" — an apparent reference to Tibetans who flee to India from China through Nepal to join the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader has lived in exile for decades in India's Himalayan foothill city of Dharamsala, after fleeing China following a failed 1959 uprising.

Saudi to dig into reserves for 2015 budget

ABDULLAH AL-SHIHRI
AYA BATRAWY
Associated Press
RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Saudi Arabia's Cabinet on Thursday endorsed a 2015 budget that projects a slight increase in spending and a significant drop in revenues due to sliding oil prices, resulting in a nearly \$39 billion deficit. In a sign of mounting financial pressure, the Finance Ministry said the government would try to cut back on salaries, wages and allowances, which "contribute to about 50 percent of total budgeted expenditures." That could stir resentment among the kingdom's youth, who make up a majority of the population and are increasingly struggling to find affordable housing and salaries that cover their cost of living. The price of oil — the backbone of Saudi Arabia's economy — has fallen by about a half since the summer. Saudi Arabia is extremely wealthy, but there are deep wealth disparities and youth unemployment

is expected to mushroom absent a dramatic rise in private sector job creation. The International Monetary

Fund says almost two-thirds of employed Saudis work for the government. A the height of Arab Spring protests sweeping the region in 2011, King Abdul-

lah pledged \$120 billion to fund a number of projects, including job creation and hikes in public sector wages. House, Valerie Marcel, said massive government spending across the Gulf on public sector salaries is

over the years from high oil prices. Saudi-based investment firm Jadwa Investment said the deficit will be financed comfortably using the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency's huge stock of net foreign assets, which totaled \$736 billion at the end of November. The 2015 budget even includes a slight increase in overall spending, which will be up 0.6 percent from the previous year. The IMF said in a report this week that the decline in oil prices highlights the need for energy-rich Arab Gulf countries to diversify their economies away from oil. It said Gulf governments need to change the incentive structure of the economy to encourage individuals to work in the private sector. In neighboring United Arab Emirates, some members of the Federal National Council, which mainly performs an advisory role, lamented this week that the country's \$13 billion 2015 budget is a "a salary budget," according to the Abu Dhabi-based newspaper The National.



Saudi Arabia's Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Ibrahim Naimi is seen at the 10th Arab energy Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Saudi Arabia's Cabinet has endorsed a budget for 2015 that projects a slight increase in spending and a significant drop in revenues due to sliding oil prices, resulting in a \$39 billion deficit. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

The move was largely seen as an effort to appease the public and blunt any challenges to monarchical rule. Associate Fellow and energy researcher at Chatham

"really the thing that keeps the lid on the bottle." She said that for now the Arab monarchies of the Gulf can afford to run deficits due to surpluses accumulated

Japan stimulus mulled as inflation, output weaken

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is planning about 3.5 trillion yen (\$29 billion) in fresh stimulus, including subsidies and job-creating programs, to help pull the world's third-largest economy out of recession. Officials said Friday that details of the plan would be approved by the Cabinet on Saturday as it wraps up work for 2014. The

plan reportedly includes 420 billion yen (\$3.5 billion) in help for stagnant regional economies. Abe took office for a third term on Wednesday and faces strong pressure to do something to restore growth after a sales tax hike in April put Japan back in recession. Data released Friday showed inflation eased slightly in November as

household spending dropped, hindering the government's effort to get the economy out of recession and back to sustainable growth. Core consumer prices, excluding food, rose 2.7 percent, while the inflation rate, excluding food and energy, was 2.1 percent. The inflation rate was 2.9 percent in October. Overall incomes fell 1.1

percent in November from a year earlier, while household spending was down 2.5 percent. Unemployment was flat at 3.5 percent. Abe's stimulus plan will focus on providing more support to lower income families and to Japan's regions where growth has stagnated, reports said Friday. Japan's central bank is buying up to 80 trillion yen (\$660 billion) in assets

each month, mostly government bonds, to help spur inflation, but so far has not attained its target of 2 percent price increases overall. Meanwhile, since wage increases have not kept pace with inflation, rising share prices and corporate profits have done little to stimulate consumer demand, apart from a rush of purchasing ahead of the April tax hike.



At the Radisson Aruba Resort Casino & Spa; Employees of General Air Services Enjoy Christmas Gala and Awards



PALM BEACH – Managing Director and CEO Alejandro Muyale, and General Manager Dimitri Pavlowitch welcomed the employees of General Air Services to the Grand Caribbean Ballroom for the traditional yearend gala party and award ceremony.

The resort's culinary team served a spectacular holiday buffet with live music and the dance floor filled with elegantly dressed couples and friends, as soon as the music started.

In the official part of the evening, General Air Services General Manager Dimitri Pavlowitch presented top performers with handsomely engraved plaques, gifts, pats on the back and enthusiastic applause.

Both Kimberly Wester and Hensley Garcia earned the Employee of the Year 2014 title for General Air Services. They were lauded for their excellent work ethics and skills, serving incoming and outgoing pas-



sengers, airplanes and handling luggage at Reina Beatrix Airport with infinite patience and professionalism.

Other recipients of the Excellent Achievement Certificate, nominated to Employee of the Year 2014, included Rudolf van Tol, Sandra Jacquet, Edine Amerlaan, Ilenia Hoek, Rafael Polanco, Sergio



Kock, Roberto Brea and Mightel Farro. They were all recognized for their stellar attitude and conduct, serving incoming and outgoing passengers, airplanes and handling luggage at Reina Beatrix Airport with total dedication, focus and pride. Pictured here, the Award Ceremony for General Air Services employees where certificates were handed to all nominees, and plaques awarded to the winners. The company explains Pavlowitch, had a busy year, enjoying business success on one hand, and facing challenges on the other, in view of political unrest outside Aruba. With close to 380 staff members, serving 35 to 40 flights daily, arriving and departing via 30plus airline companies, General Air Services is looking forward to an equally fruitful and rewarding 2015. □



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Red Sail Sports Introduces its full service DMC team

PALM BEACH - Suzanne van Grinsven, Marketing & Events Manager and Isabelle Kainama Rugebregt, Sales and Marketing Manager, now head the team specializing in creating programs for incentive groups, at the helm of one of the island's most dynamic Destination Management Company, Red Sail Sports.

As such Red Sail Sports handles airport transfers, activities, team-building events, themed events and amenities, and both talented and highly driven account managers on the DMC team are available to discuss customized programs and provide additional information, pricing and detailed planning.

Red Sail Sports has for the last eight years acquired an extensive list of clients, serving groups ranging from in size from 2 to 500 guests, for whom the company planned, coordinated and managed a wide range of

activities and meeting programs.

Suzanne explains the company offers every activity available on the island and will cater to special requests. Her team will coordinate any group's program with only one goal in mind: Making guests feel happy and special, from the moment they step off the plane to the time of departure at the wake of an unforgettable stay on Aruba.

Red Sail Sports with over 25 years experience in tourism, is in possession of the professional know-how, adds Isabella, and it offers groups personal, efficient and friendly service, with a heart.

At the core of its business, Red Sail Sports is Aruba's largest watersports operator with a fleet of four custom designed catamarans and three dive boats. As an EarthCheck silver certified tour operator, the

company embraces the concept of true safety having acquired the proper insurances with world-wide coverage. In partnership with all major hotels in Aruba and numerous on-island service providers Red Sail Sports is positioned to create unique experiences and an assortment of exciting island activities, both on and off the water.

True to its slogan, Aruba 'One Happy Island', this remains a very popular destination, says Suzanne, with great year-round weather, short on-island transits, guaranteed safety, innate native friendliness, as well as a high overall quality of services, hotels, restaurants, nightlife and activities.

Both Suzanne, with the company since March 2013, and the recently recruited Isabella, will make sure any program is a success from the airport meet & greet, to transfers by bus or Limo, including the on-



site registration and hospitality desks staffing, representation services, team building activities, themed evening events, spouse programs and celebrity and VIP services.

Our managers serve as contact persons for the duration of the programs, from the planning until the scheduling of next year's

program, adds managing director Peter de Hoop. They are looking forward to working with large and small group with the same enthusiasm. Isabelle's restaurant and catering experience combined with Suzanne marketing background, can and will move mountains for clients, he adds. □

De Palm Tours Again Awarded by Princess Cruises



ORANJESTAD – De Palm Tours is again honored with an award for the Princess Cruises high-volume tour as well as an award for the Best Tour Guide for the 2013-2014 season. Of all the destinations that Princess Cruises goes to, De Palm Tours 4WD Baby Natural Bridge & Arashi Beach Island Tour won its high-volume tour award and Brian Morris from Atlantis Submarine was voted the Best Tour Guide. The Countryside Horseback Ride from Rancho La Ponderosa, also sold by De Palm Tours, won the low-volume tour award for the season.

Every season, Princess Cruises holds an award ceremony for the tours and activities offered at each port that are liked most by their passengers. A ceremony was held aboard the Crown Princess where the De Palm Tours Corporation was honored for the awards. Passengers of Princess Cruises voted De Palm Tours' highly acclaimed 4WD adventure and off-road jeep excursion as number one. This isn't a new celebratory moment for the company, as two times before Atlantis Submarines has been honored for the high-volume award

and also their Natural Pool Jeep Adventure, not to mention the dozens of other nominations De Palm Tours has taken the cake for from other Princess Cruises tour categories. Brian Morris from Atlantis Submarine and who was awarded as best tour guide by Princess Cruises' guests, claims that the submarine experience is a unique opportunity to explore Aruba's waters away from the shores. One of the only commercial submarines in the Caribbean, the Atlantis VI takes passengers 135 feet below the sea surface through the Barcadera Reef, witnessing an array of colorful and abundant sea life while learning about the surrounding waters and its inhabitants. De Palm Tours' off-road Land Rover guides combine their passion for the island and knowledge about its history to make the tours an unforgettable memory for guests as they rip through the backside of Aruba and towards beautiful Arashi Beach.

The Princess Cruises line allows for its passengers to "escape completely" with eight consecutive years voted as "Best Cruise Itineraries" by Recommend



Magazine. As one of the destinations on the Southern Caribbean Cruises line, Aruba is advertised as the ideal place for snorkeling where almost every inch of coastline shows off

the island's supreme waters, which guests indulge in on both the submarine tour and jeep adventure. Warren Stanley, General Manager of De Palm Tours, would like to thank Prin-

cess Cruises for their continued support, but most of all the employees for taking pride in their jobs and wholeheartedly making these tours memorable experiences. □



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Loyal Visitors Honored at the Marriott Surf Club



PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly guests of Aru-



ba, at the Marriott Surf Club as Distinguished Visitors. The symbolic honorary titles are presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as

a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10 to 19 consecutive years. The honorees were Mrs. Marsha Watts from Phila-



delphia, Pennsylvania, and Mr. Anthony and Mrs. Veronica Desposito from Long Beach, New York. The honorees are loyal members of the Marriott Surf Club and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the climate, beaches, restau-

rants, relaxation and being on Aruba and staying at the Surf Club is like being home for them. The certificates were presented by Mr. Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Ms. Jenny Boekhoudt representing the Marriott Surf Club. □



MLB average salary exceeds \$3.8 million

RONALD BLUM

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball's average salary shot up to more than \$3.8 million this year in the steepest rise since 2001, putting big leaguers on track to top the \$4 million barrier for the first time in 2015.

The Major League Baseball Players Association said on Tuesday the average salary was \$3,818,923, up from \$3,386,212 last year. The 12.78 percent hike was the biggest since a 12.83 percent rise from 2000 to 2001. Player salaries are spurting after several years of more modest gains.

The increase is fueled by record revenue in the \$9 billion range, much of it from national television contracts and club deals with regional sports networks.

The average topped \$1 million for the first time in

1992, crossed the \$2 million barrier in 2001 and the \$3 million mark in 2010.

MLB's wages are a stark contrast to the economy at large. The average U.S. wage rose 1.3 percent in 2013 to \$43,041, according to the Social Security Administration.

Figures are based on 910 players.

The union has based its annual studies on rosters and disabled lists as of Aug. 31 — the last day before active rosters expand from 25 per team to 40.

The commissioner's office, which uses slightly different methods, put its average at \$3,726,243, an increase of 12 percent from last year's \$3,326,645. MLB revised its figure on Tuesday from an initial average of \$3,692,123 it calculated last week.

The union did not release its annual averages for teams and positions. □



In this Sept. 26, 2014, file photo, Los Angeles Angels center fielder Mike Trout makes a leaping catch on the run of a ball hit by Seattle Mariners' Kendrys Morales in the eighth inning of a baseball game in Seattle.

Associated Press

Stricker has surgery to alleviate pain in hip



Tiger Woods, right, has a brief conversation with Steve Stricker on the first fairway during the final round of the Hero World Challenge golf tournament on Sunday, Dec. 7, 2014, in Windermere, Fla.

Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Steve Stricker has had surgery on a bulging disk in

his lower back to alleviate recurring issues in his hip area. Mario Tiziani, Stricker's brother-in-law and agent, says the one-hour surgery on Tuesday was successful and Stricker will be away from golf for at least eight weeks.

The 12-time tour winner won't be missing much. Stricker already plays a reduced schedule, and he was not likely to play in 2015 until the Florida swing. The 47-year-old Stricker rested for nearly four months before playing the Hero World Challenge and Franklin Templeton Shootout. □

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Slumping New Jersey Devils fire coach Pete DeBoer

TOM CANAVAN

AP Sports Writer

NEWARK, New Jersey

(AP) — Pete DeBoer, who coached the New Jersey Devils to the Stanley Cup finals in his first season in 2011-12, was fired Friday, with his aging and diminished team in danger of missing the playoffs for a third straight season.

Devils president and general manager Lou Lamoriello would not say who will be the next coach until he speaks Saturday with the players, who are on a three-day Christmas break. The Devils play the Rangers in New York on Saturday.

New Jersey has been hit with injuries in a 12-17-7 season. It has not won consecutive games since early last month, going 3-8-5 in its last 16. The Devils were missing six regulars to either injury or illness Tuesday night when they lost 2-1 in a shootout to the Carolina



In this Nov. 14, 2014, file photo, New Jersey Devils head coach Peter DeBoer stands in the bench area during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the Washington Capitals, in Washington. Associated Press

Hurricanes, the NHL's second-worst team.

"I know that no one wants to hear excuses and I am not going to make any, but I am definitely not going to throw our guys under the bus," DeBoer said Tuesday. "Guys are trying."

The problem is the guys are not as talented as they used to be.

DeBoer is the third NHL coach to be fired this season, following Paul MacLean in Ottawa and Dallas Eakins in Edmonton.

DeBoer was 114-93-41 in his three-plus seasons with the Devils. Before coming to New Jersey, he coached the Florida Panthers for three seasons, never making the playoffs.

The 46-year-old DeBoer

was hired in 2011-12 and immediately took the Devils to the Stanley Cup finals, where they lost to the Los Angeles Kings.

The Devils, however, lost Zach Parise to free agency after the season. They took an unexpected blow after the lockout-shortened 2012-13 season when goal scorer Ilya Kovalchuk left to play in Russia. They were the team's two best players and their losses were keenly felt, especially in shootouts.

The Devils were 0-13 in shootouts last season and 2-6 this season, their first since not resigning goaltender Martin Brodeur, the long-time face of the three-time Stanley Cup champions. □

U.S. beats Finland 2-1 in SO in junior opener

MONTREAL (AP) — Jack Eichel and Chase DeLeo scored in a shootout to help the United States beat defending champion Finland 2-1 on Friday in their round-robin opener in the World Junior Championship.

Eichel is a freshman at Boston University, and DeLeo plays for Portland in the Western Hockey League. Mikko Rantanen scored for Finland, and Boston Col-

lege's Alex Tuch tied it on a first-period power play. Boston College's Thatcher Demko made 29 saves for the Americans, and Ville Husso stopped 36 shots for Finland.

In the other Group A game Friday night at Bell Centre, Canada faced Slovakia.

In Group B in Toronto, Russia beat Denmark 3-2 in a shootout, and Sweden faced the Czech Republic. □

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WEEKLY CALENDAR

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Monday

Senior Night + 3X Points (9am-11am)
Seniors 50 + Receive 1x \$10 Free Play Cash
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Tuesday

2x Points (5pm - 8pm)

Wednesday

Free Slot Tournament
\$900 in cash prizes
Tournament starts at 8pm — Registration at 6pm
*Must accumulate 25 points during the week to be eligible to participate in the tournament.

Thursday

Random Pick Slot Winner
Dinner for Two at LG Smith, Lunch for two at Aquarius & \$50 Free Play Cash
Gentleman Night For each 10 points earned on same day redeem a ticket to enter the drawing for \$300 at 10pm

Friday

Seasons Dazzle Night
\$1100 in cash prizes
First drawing starts at 9pm

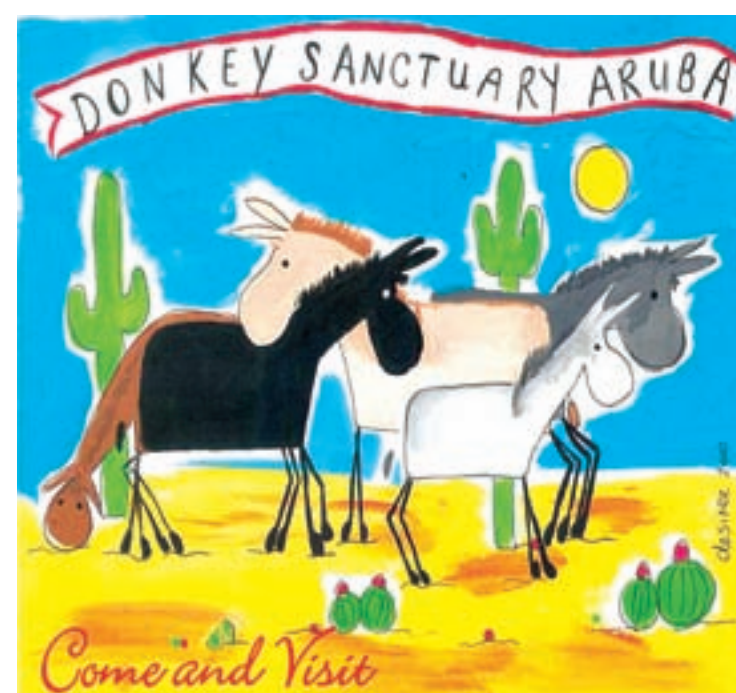
Saturday

Sizzling Santa's Cash Night
\$2000 in cash prizes
First drawing starts at 9pm

Sunday

4x Points 6pm - 9pm

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For more information, please call 583-6000 ext.6318 or ext.6437



Westbrook scores 34, lifts Thunder over Spurs

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Russell Westbrook scored 34 points, and the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the San Antonio Spurs 114-106 on Thursday in a rematch of last season's Western Conference Finals.

The Thunder earned their sixth straight regular-season victory over the defending NBA champions in the first meeting between the teams since San Antonio topped Oklahoma City in six games on the way to a fifth title.

The Thunder was without reigning MVP Kevin Durant, and the Spurs were missing Finals MVP Kawhi Leonard, but there was still plenty of firepower.

Serge Ibaka had 21 points, including going 3 for 4 on 3-pointers for Oklahoma City (14-16). Steven Adams added 16 points and 15 rebounds to offset San Antonio center Tiago Splitter matching his season-high with 14 points.

Matt Bonner had 17 points to lead seven players in double figures for San Antonio (18-12), which has lost five of six. Tim Duncan had 15 points, six rebounds and five assists.

HEAT 101, CAVALIERS 91

MIAMI (AP) —Dwyane Wade scored 24 of his 31 points in the first half, Luol Deng finished with 25 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, and the Miami Heat beat the Cleveland Cavaliers in LeBron James' first game back at his former home.

Chris Andersen scored 12 for the Heat, who led by as many as 17, trailed for a moment in the fourth quarter before gathering themselves and pulling away again.

James scored 30 points for the Cavaliers, hugging his former teammates before the game and after the final buzzer. It was James' first time as an opponent in Miami since he helped the Heat reach each of the last four NBA Finals, winning two titles.

Kyrie Irving added 25 points, and Kevin Love scored 14 for Cleveland.

Miami was again without Chris Bosh, still sidelined by a calf injury.

CLIPPERS 100, WARRIORS 86

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jamal Crawford scored 12 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter, Chris Paul added 22 points, and Los Angeles handed NBA-leading Golden State its second Staples Center loss in three days. The Warriors held the Clippers to 4-for-24 shooting in the first quarter and 39.1 percent for the game, two nights after the Lakers shot 51.7 percent without Kobe Bryant to beat them 115-105. That loss ended a streak of 27 straight games by the Warriors in which they held opponents under 50 percent. The Clippers, beginning a nine-game homestand after back-to-back losses to San Antonio and Atlanta, haven't dropped three in a row since March 29-April 1, 2013. Blake Griffin missed his first eight shots and was 5 for 16 overall with 18 points and 15 rebounds. DeAndre Jordan had 14 points and 12 boards.

Klay Thompson scored 15 points, and Stephen Curry 14 for Golden State, which has lost three of five following a 23-3 start that included a franchise-record 16-game winning streak.

BULLS 113, LAKERS 93

CHICAGO (AP) — Pau Gasol had 23 points and 13 rebounds against his former team and Chicago beat Los Angeles with Lakers star Kobe Bryant resting his sore body.

Jimmy Butler added 21 points, and Derrick Rose had 20 points and six assists to help the Bulls win their season-high fifth straight.

With Bryant missing his second straight game, the Lakers were unable to pull off another upset. They stunned Golden State on Tuesday night but came up short against the Central division leaders.

Gasol, a two-time champion in six-plus seasons with

the Lakers, was 9 of 14 from the field in his first game against Los Angeles since joining the Bulls in the summer.

Wesley Johnson led Los Angeles with 19 points.

WIZARDS 102, KNICKS 91

NEW YORK (AP) — John Wall had 24 points and 11 assists, eluding the Knicks all day until getting knocked to the floor by a flagrant foul that sparked an altercation, and Washington beat New York.

Wall toyed with the Knicks for 3 1/2 quarters, highlighted by a spinning, 360-degree layup, before Quincy Acy knocked him down with a forearm shove with 5:31 to play. Wall got up and pushed Acy, who responded with a punch that appeared to hit Wall behind the neck. □



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook, right, shoots over San Antonio Spurs guard Cory Joseph during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Dec. 25, 2014, in San Antonio.

Associated Press

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Win up to \$300 cash spinning the wheel
 Play any of our slot machines and have a chance to spin the wheel. First spin at 6pm
3X Points 4-8pm

Tuesday Holiday Cash Mania 2X Points 4-8pm
\$675 in cash prizes

Wednesday Free Bingo Night
 Bingo starts at 9:30pm. Issuing bingo cards from 8pm.
 Play 25 points on your member's card to receive a free bingo card
Holiday Ladies Night
 All ladies participate for \$300. For each 10 points earned on same day redeem a ticket to enter the drawing for \$300 at 10pm

Thursday Free Slot Tournament
\$625 in cash prizes
 Tournament starts at 8pm — Registration at 6pm
 Must accumulate 25 points during the week to be eligible

Friday Santa's Crazy Cash
\$800 in cash prizes
 The more you play the more chances you have!
 For every 25 points earned during the week redeem your ticket for Santa's Crazy Cash First drawing starts at 9pm

Saturday Table Mania (chips)
\$800 in cash prizes
 First drawing starts at 9pm

Sunday 4X Fun Points
 10am - 12noon & 6pm - 9pm

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College Roundup

Jackson leads Rice to Hawaii Bowl win

HONOLULU (AP) — Rice quarterback Driphus Jackson played his best game of the year to lead the Owls to a 30-6 victory over Fresno State in the Hawaii Bowl on Wednesday.

The other Christmas Eve college bowl game was the Bahamas Bowl — the first bowl game played outside the United States or Canada for 77 years — and the contest lived up to the occasion as Western Kentucky beat Central Michigan 49-48.

Rice's Jackson passed for 318 yards and three touchdowns as the Owls capped a remarkable season in which they lost their first three games, yet ended up with their second bowl win in three years.

Jackson was accurate with his arm and dangerous with his feet, rushing for 41 yards and some key scrambles out of trouble.

Fresno State — the only team with more losses than wins this year to qualify for a bowl game — put in their worst offensive performance for the season.

The Bulldogs lost their sixth consecutive bowl game.

The inaugural Bahamas Bowl was decided only as time expired when Central Michigan attempted a two-point conversion which fell incomplete.

The Chippewas trailed 49-14 entering the fourth quarter before quarterback Cooper Rush engineered a comeback. He threw four touchdown passes in the final minutes, and they got the ball back at their own 25-yard line with one second remaining.

Rush completed a pass, and the ball was passed laterally three times before Titus Davis dived into the endzone for a touchdown with no time remaining.

Central Michigan could have gone for the regulation one-point conversion kick and forced overtime, but elected to go for two and the win, only to have the pass drop incomplete.

Rush threw seven touchdown passes for the Chippewas, tying an all-time bowl record, while winning quarterback Brandon Doughty threw five first-half touchdown passes for the Hilltoppers.



Western Kentucky running back Anthony Wales (20) carries the ball into the end zone as quarterback Brandon Doughty, rear left, signals touchdown signal during WKU's 49-48 victory over Central Michigan in the Bahamas Bowl NCAA college football game, Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2014, in Nassau, Bahamas.

Associated Press

Catch your own dinner with Driftwood!

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ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of Driftwood Fishing Charters, the successful fisherman of the established seafood restaurant Driftwood in Oranjestad. Driftwood owner Herby

Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words "fresh seafood" really mean.

What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on 12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm.



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Driftwood Restaurant. This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their

extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95 **Charter deep sea fishing rates:** \$400 - 1/2 day • \$760 - full day. Rates per boat Max. 6 people. **Driftwood Restaurant** Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat #12, Downtown Oranjestad. Tel: (297) 583 2515 www.driftwoodaruba.com Open hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm. Sunday Closed.

Cleveland reaches 50 years of sports futility

By TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) -- For this golden anniversary, there won't be any gifts exchanged or champagne-sipping celebrations.

There's no reason to party or toast these 50 years, a half-century of sports suffering and failure best forgotten.

This Saturday will mark the 50th anniversary of Cleveland's last pro sports championship when the Browns beat the heavily favored Baltimore Colts 27-0 to win the NFL title, the last for the franchise and the city. Since then, the Browns, Indians and Cavaliers have gone a combined 141 seasons without winning it all. That's five decades. That's 18,262 days. That's a long time.

"It's hard to believe," Hall of Fame running back Jim Brown said. "Because when you look back at 50 years, something's wrong, because somebody should've figured out something. ... We've got money and we've got a new building and we've got green grass and we can draft players, and we can't do any better than that?"

Cleveland's title drought is the longest for any North American city with three pro franchises. San Diego has gone 51 years since the Chargers won an AFL title, but the California



In this Sept. 10, 2004, file photo, Hall of Famer Jim Brown, center, picks up a trophy presented by NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, to the members of Cleveland Browns 1964 Championship Team at Severance Hall in Cleveland. At left is Bernie Parish, and at right Paul Wiggin. The original trophy presented to the team after their 1964 victory over the Baltimore Colts is in the possession of the Green Bay Packers, who were the 1965 Championship Team.

Associated Press

city no longer has an NBA team and it's a little easier to handle misery when it's sunny and 70 most of the year.

In Cleveland, generations of fans have only known what it's like to finish second or third or worse, which is why superstar LeBron James' decision to come home last summer and re-sign with the Cavs was cheered as if he had delivered that elusive championship.

Around here, "wait until next year" is engrained in the population's collective

psychology. They made it to the NBA Finals for the first time in 2007, but were swept by San Antonio.

It's enough to sour the biggest optimist, and the titleless decades have led to theories that a curse has been placed on the city's three teams.

Browns quarterback Brian Hoyer grew up in Cleveland, where sports pain is part of every kid's upbringing.

"I lived through the World Series, we were so close," he said. "Then LeBron and them went to the championship, but it wasn't even close. But it's Cleveland."

But on Dec. 27, 1964, when LBJ was in the White House and the Beatles had invaded America, the Browns ruled.

Facing a high-scoring Baltimore squad favored by



Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James (23) hangs onto the basket after a dunk during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Miami Heat, Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014, in Miami. James was called for a technical foul on the play. The Heat won 101-91.

Associated Press



In this Sunday, Dec. 21, 2014, file photo, Cleveland Browns' Johnny Manziel (2) is helped off the field after being injured in the first half of an NFL football game against the Carolina Panthers in Charlotte, N.C.

Associated Press

psyche.

It hasn't all been bad. There have been a few magical seasons, they just didn't end magically but with heartbreak. The Browns made it to three AFC title games from 1987-1990, but lost each time to Denver and quarterback John Elway. Two of those defeats have been given lasting nicknames: "The Drive" and "The Fumble."

The Indians, who haven't won a world championship since 1948, ended a 41-year drought by getting to the World Series in 1995 only to lose to Atlanta. Cleveland returned two years later but lost Game 7 in extra innings to Florida. With All-Stars Mark Price and Brad Daugherty, the Cavaliers had some title-worthy teams in the 1980s that were stopped by Mi-

double digits and loaded with future Hall of Famers like Johnny Unitas, Lenny Moore and Raymond Berry, the Browns won their first title since 1955. Wide receiver Gary Collins caught three touchdown passes in the second half from Frank Ryan, Lou Groza kicked two field goals and Cleveland's defense pitched an unlikely shutout in front of 79,544 fans. □

NFL pass-rushers turn to martial arts tactics

ARNIE STAPLETON

AP Pro Football Writer

DENVER (AP) — Denver defensive end DeMarcus Ware considers himself a mixed martial artist on the football field.

Ever since his rookie year in 2005, he's spent as much time in the offseason working on his handwork with a second generation Bruce Lee student as he has working out at a traditional gym. Ware is part of a growing number of NFL pass rushers who have adopted the grappling and striking techniques of MMA. It helps them outmaneuver the ever-expanding 330-pound tackles and get to the ever-quicker quarterbacks before they can throw the football.

Ware credits the moves he's learned and refined under the tutelage of Valentin Espiricueta, owner/operator of Applied MMA in Dallas, for helping him amass 127 sacks over his decade in the NFL.

"If I didn't learn martial arts, I'd be just a basic dip-and-rip guy just trying to go around the corner," Ware said.

Instead, Espiricueta's star pupil and eight-time Pro Bowler uses swift swipes and whirlwind motions to set up and ultimately van-



In this Nov. 16, 2014, file photo, Denver Broncos defensive end DeMarcus Ware rushes during the second quarter of an NFL football game against the St. Louis Rams in St. Louis.

Associated Press

quish pass protectors. Like a fighter getting the best of his opponent in the octagon.

Sparring or grappling with technical fighters and their trainers teaches NFL players to swat away and otherwise avoid punches from O-linemen. It also aids their cardiovascular training, tenacity and acumen.

"What we're doing at least in the grappling aspect of our sport is we're manipulating another man's body, putting it where we want it, whether that's putting it on

the ground or moving it to the left or right or off-balance," said Matt "The Immortal" Brown, a 33-year-old welterweight UFC fighter from Columbus, Ohio. "So, to learn how to control another man's body is surely going to be an important skill for them. Anytime it's one on one, man against man, there's going to be some correlation."

Packers pass rusher Datone Jones said MMA training helps his "hand-eye coordination, balance, body control and just being able

to strike, being able to endure more." The ancillary benefit, he said, is greater flexibility, "so it's working on more areas so you get stronger, flexible, faster, looser."

Vikings pass rusher Brian Robison said mastering MMA techniques and transferring them to the football field "allow you to rush the passer a little bit easier."

Ware was introduced to the martial arts aspect of pass rushing by Greg Ellis, a defensive end in the NFL from 1998-2009. Ellis learned of

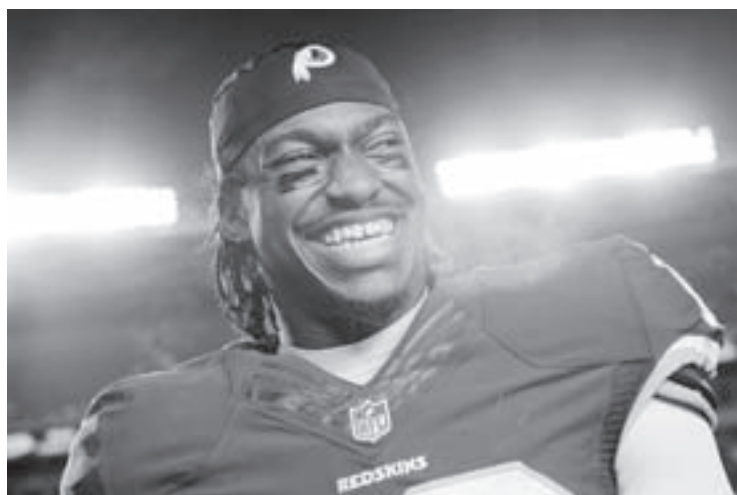
Espiricueta's training methods from Randy White, who played for the Cowboys from 1975-88.

"Greg Ellis told me, 'You're not going to have this speed forever. But you can have the quickness.' So, one thing I learned when I did have a lot of ability, like Von Miller, was I would actually just beat guys from here," Ware said, tapping his right temple, "instead of beating them just with athleticism."

Espiricueta combined the Filipino martial art known as Kali with the Bruce Lee style of Kungfu known as Jeet Kune Do, or JKD. Practitioners of JKD believe in smooth, minimal movements and with maximum effects and extreme speed. It is referred to as "the art of fighting without fighting."

Espiricueta, who studied under Bruce Lee student Dan Inosanto, has worked with numerous NFL players, but said Ware "took it to a different level."

He developed a training program customized for football players in response to the league's rule change in 1978 that allowed offensive linemen to open their hands and leave their arms extended rather than use the hit-and-recoil techniques like boxers.



Washington Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III smiles on the sideline after the Redskins defeated the Philadelphia Eagles 27-24 in an NFL football game Saturday, Dec. 20, 2014, in Landover, Md.

Associated Press

JOSEPH WHITE

AP Sports Writer

ASHBURN, Va. (AP) — Robert Griffin III has a sprained throwing shoulder that limited him in practice Wednesday as the Washington

Redskins prepared for their season finale against the Dallas Cowboys.

Griffin appeared to be throwing normally during the portion of the workout open to reporters, but

Redskins' RG3 limited with sprained shoulder

coach Jay Gruden said the shoulder has some "lingering soreness."

"It needs to get better," Gruden said. "I don't think it's a serious deal, but if it affects his throwing, then it could be an issue."

Gruden said Griffin was hurt on a sack by Fletcher Cox in the fourth quarter of Saturday's 27-24 win over the Philadelphia Eagles. Griffin remained in the game.

The Redskins have only one other quarterback, Kirk Cousins, on the 53-man roster, but Gruden said he doesn't think the injury is

serious enough to bring in someone else as a contingency measure.

"I don't anticipate that happening," Gruden said. Colt McCoy, who has started five games this season, is on injured reserve with a neck injury.

Griffin will get a chance to rest the shoulder Thursday because the Redskins are not practicing on Christmas Day.

Griffin has had an injury-riddled three seasons in the NFL. He's had two major leg injuries, including a dislocated ankle that side-

lined him for six games this season.

Left tackle Trent Williams did not practice Wednesday, but he said he expected to play against Dallas. Williams has a sprained right shoulder and also played through a sprained right knee and sprained right ankle this season. He was nevertheless selected to his third Pro Bowl on Tuesday.

"I didn't put my best product on the field a lot of times this year," Williams said, "just trying to play through injuries to be there for my teammates."

Streaming release of 'Interview' test for industry

MAE ANDERSON

AP Technology Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Sony's "The Interview" has been a hacking target, a punchline and a political lightning rod. Now, with its release online at the same time it debuts in theaters, it has a new role: a test for a new kind of movie release. "The Interview" stars Seth Rogen and James Franco as journalists tasked by the CIA with killing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Its Christmas Day release was canceled by Sony after threats of violence by hackers linked to North Korea. But after an outcry, the release was reinstated in some independent theaters and now, through a few online video services.

Although the circumstances surrounding "The Interview" are unprecedented, experts say the release will be closely watched to see how moviegoers and theater chains react to a simultaneous debut. It's a challenge to the longstanding practice of "windowing" — opening a movie first in theaters to maximize box-office revenue before making the movie available in other stages of home video, streaming and television. "I can't say that this is the future," said Jeff Bock, senior box office analyst for Exhibitor Relations Co. "For this film, in particular, it works because of the saga that goes along with it. But it's nice to have a film we can actually use as a guinea pig for a video-on-demand release."

Sony released "The Interview" Wednesday on a variety of digital platforms — Google Play, YouTube Movies, Microsoft's Xbox Video and a separate Sony website. It costs \$5.99 to rent for 48 hours and \$14.99 to purchase. It also will open in more than 300 smaller theaters on Thursday, though major chains are still holding out.

Carrying "The Interview" marks another step in Google's efforts to establish YouTube as an entertainment hub that features major movies and trendy



In this Dec. 25, 2014 file photo, Derek Karpel holds his ticket to a screening of "The Interview" at Cinema Village movie theater, in New York. The film raked in just over \$1 million in ticket sales from 331 locations for an impressive \$3,142 per theater average, according to distributor Sony Pictures. Associated Press

musical videos — not just cute clips of kitties. Google, though, said it is providing outlets for the movie because it wants to safeguard free speech.

Decisions by Google and Microsoft to show the movie could open their sites to hacking. Microsoft reported technical problems with its Xbox sign-in system Wednesday, though it wasn't known whether it was the result of hacking. Microsoft services appeared back to normal by Wednesday night. Microsoft declined comment.

Online availability of "The Interview" comes as more people are choosing to stream video online, largely because of YouTube, Hulu and Netflix, which has been phasing out its original DVD-by-mail business over the past four years. During that time, the number of Netflix subscribers in the U.S. has nearly doubled to about 40 million in a reflection of Internet video's growing popularity.

Nonetheless, releasing a major motion picture in theaters and online simultaneously — known as a "day-and-date" release — has never been done by a major studio with a mainstream movie like "The Interview." It's been limited to some smaller indie and foreign movies. The up-

coming "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" sequel will be released on Netflix and Imax theaters on the same day, but that isn't a studio production, despite the involvement of the Weinstein Co.

Theater chains have been trying to preserve the traditional theatrical window. Regal Cinemas and Cinemark, for example, declined to screen Warner Bros.' day-and-date re-

lease "Veronica Mars" earlier this year. Warner Bros. instead rented from AMC Theaters most of the 270 screens the movie played in while it was also released on VOD.

This time, however, the four major theater chains can't really object, analysts said, as they all declined to show "The Interview," leaving Sony little choice.

"This isn't being done because Sony wants to do it

regularly, but rather out of necessity prompted by the exhibitor boycott," Wedbush Securities analyst Michael Pachter said. "The only guys showing it are independent chains."

With a modest budget of about \$40 million, "The Interview" had been predicted to gross about \$30 million in its opening weekend. Bock estimates Sony could gross just a fraction of that — \$3 million to \$4 million — at this box office this weekend. As for streaming, Bock said the \$5.99 price for rental is much lower than regular theater tickets, and that could drive demand.

A best-case scenario for a video-on-demand release is the thriller "Snowpiercer," which debuted on video on demand about two weeks after its theatrical release. It made nearly \$11 million on VOD, more than double its theatrical revenue, and is considered one of the most successful VOD releases so far.

If "The Interview" agreement is similar to other digital video deals, Google and Microsoft will get a 30 percent commission on all rentals and purchases of the movies made through their services.

Sony's PlayStation network still out; Xbox back online

By BRANDON BAILEY

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) -- Sony's PlayStation network remains offline in an outage that began as video game players unwrapped new consoles on Christmas.

Microsoft's Xbox Live service, which had also gone down, is back online but the company website says some applications aren't fully functioning.

A group calling itself Lizard Squad claimed responsibility on Twitter for causing the disruption by overwhelming the companies' servers with a flood of Internet traffic.

A group that called itself



In this Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014 photo, a shopper walks on the logo of Sony's PlayStation 4 at an electronics store in Tokyo.

Lizard Squad in August also took credit on Twitter for disrupting the PlayStation network and tweeted a report of a bomb on a plane carrying a Sony executive.

The plane had to be diverted.

It's unclear if these episodes are related to the recent hack of Sony's movie division.

'Santa Rally' continues on Wall Street

ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

Wall Street's "Santa Claus" rally kept delivering gifts a day after Christmas. The Dow Jones industrial average, Standard & Poor's 500 index and the Russell 2000 index of small-company stocks closed at all-time highs on Friday. The modest pickup in stocks, which gave the Dow its seventh consecutive gain, came on a day of relatively light trading following the holiday break for U.S. markets. Utilities stocks were among the biggest gainers. Oil prices continued to de-

or 0.3 percent, to 2,088.77. That's up 0.3 percent from the S&P 500's most-recent all-time high recorded on Tuesday. The Nasdaq composite rose 33.39 points, or 0.7 percent, to 4,806.86. The last time the index was higher was March 28, 2000, during the heady days of the dot-com bubble. The Russell 2000 climbed 8.42 points, or 0.7 percent, to 1,215.21. That's an increase of 0.5 percent from the Russell's previous all-time high on March 4. U.S. government bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note

second-best, Chalupnik noted. The stock market opened higher Friday and held steady the rest of the day. There wasn't any major U.S. economic or corporate news. Major European markets were closed for the holiday. Markets in Asia posted slight gains. Investors kept an eye on oil prices, which have been a major focus in over the past few weeks. Benchmark U.S. crude oil fell \$1.11 to close at \$54.73 a barrel. Oil prices have fallen by about a half since the summer as traders worry that



A traders wears a "DOW 18,000" hat on the floor at the New York Stock Exchange in New York. Wall Street's "Santa Claus" rally kept delivering gifts a day after Christmas.(AP Photo/Seth Wenig)

cline. That made traders hopeful for stronger consumer spending heading into next year, since drivers won't need to pay as much to fill up their cars. "Holiday sales look good. The consumer is in good shape," said David Chalupnik, head of equities at Nuveen Asset Management. "We're ending the year strong and my guess is the market continues to trend higher through year-end and January is probably going to be a good month as well." The Dow gained 23.50 points to close at 18,053.71. That's up 0.1 percent from its previous record high on Wednesday. The Standard & Poor's 500 index added 6.89 points,

dipped to 2.25 percent. The stock market has been mostly climbing since hitting a recent low of 17,069 on Dec. 16 on worries about plunging oil prices and a sharp drop in Russia's currency. Since then, investors have been encouraged by signs of a strengthening U.S. economy, which the government estimates grew in the July-September quarter at the fastest pace in 11 years. Consumer spending and personal incomes have been rising. The economy has been creating more jobs. The markets also have history on their side. December is typically the best month of the year for stocks, while January is the

there won't be enough global demand for the abundant supplies of oil being produced. Eight of the 10 sectors in the S&P 500 index rose, led by utilities stocks. The sector is up 27.9 percent this year. Energy posted the biggest decline, deepening its slide this year to 9 percent. Celgene notched the biggest gain among individual stocks in the S&P 500, adding \$3.75, or 3.4 percent, to \$113.35. Newfield Exploration declined the most, shedding 89 cents, or 3.2 percent, to \$26.97. Most metals prices rose. Gold gained \$21.80 to \$1,195.30 an ounce. Silver rose 44 cents to \$16.15 an ounce, and copper fell four cents to \$2.81 an ounce. □

US company to open a tuna cannery in American Samoa

FILI SAGAPOLUTELE
Associated Press

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (AP) — A Washington state company is making a \$70 million investment in a tuna cannery in the U.S. territory of American Samoa. The canned tuna products from American Samoa will carry the "Made In USA" label, said officials with Tri Marine International. Based in Bellevue, Washington, Tri Marine took over the lease of a government property three years ago after another cannery closed. Tri Marine's cannery plant is expected to employ some 1,500 workers when fully operational and is operated by the company's Samoa Tuna Process Inc., located on seaside village of Atu'u. American Samoa's economy is dependent on the tuna cannery industry. "We are \$70 million confident of our investment in the cannery project," Tri Marine Chief Executive Officer Renato Curto said. "Ultimately, our decision to invest came down to our belief that tuna is a good, nutritious product, that tuna stocks can be sustainably managed for the long-term and that processing in the islands is the right thing to do," he said. Gov. Lolo Matalasi Moliga said the territorial government stands firm in its support of Tri Marine, especially on this latest investment that will boost the local economy and provide more jobs to residents looking for work. The investment will allow the company to "remain competitive in this very competitive global industry," Moliga said. Outgoing chamber of commerce chairman Lewis Wolman said that besides the large workforce, the new cannery will have direct impacts like buying products from local vendors and supporting the shipping industry. But it will also have significant indirect impacts, such as the purchases made by workers from their paychecks. An inauguration ceremony is planned for Jan. 24. The new cannery will focus on the U.S. market, where tuna products from American Samoa are duty-free, said Curto, adding that this helps offset the higher cost of processing in the territory as compared with industrialized centers in low-labor-cost countries like Thailand, Philippines and China. "We are targeting retail and food service clients who want to know where their tuna was caught, who caught it, how it was caught and where it was processed," Curto said. The company plans to produce private label and its own brand of tuna markets. The brand is made by Tri Marine subsidiary, The Tuna Store, and it is already on shelves under the name Ocean Naturals. In addition to the new cannery, Tri Marine's Samoa Tuna Processor Inc., a cold storage facility, opened last year. The facility can receive fish directly from the fishing boats. Curto said catch from the boats can be sized and separated by species before being processed by local plant or exported as whole fish. Tri Marine also owns a fleet of 10 U.S.-flagged purse seiners based in Pago Pago to supply tuna to the cannery, he said. Curto said the company has invested well over \$200 million in American Samoa between its fleet and facilities. There have been some concerns by a few American Samoa officials that Tri Marine's new cannery will compete with the company's SolTuna Inc. cannery operation in the Solomon Islands, a South Pacific country with a land mass of 11,000 square miles. But Curto said SolTuna, which is a partnership between Tri Marine and the Solomon Islands government, produces products for other markets, which includes the South Pacific region and Europe where products from Solomon Islands have duty-free access. □

Atheist's Christmas Dream



MARK BITTMAN
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I've spent much of my life trying to ignore Christmas. As a secular Jew, an atheist and a progressive, my reasons are common. It's a commercial, obnoxious, even dreaded holiday. But it's not changing anytime soon and we should make the best of it. (Hanukkah, I might note, is no better, although it gives us an excuse to eat latkes.)

Nothing is as simple, though, as it seems when you're young, when my dislike of Christmas was more intense. In fact this is a good week. The winter solstice, by definition the gloomiest day of the year, represents optimism: The days do nothing but get longer and brighter from now on. Sweet-smelling trees can turn a cramped apartment into something exotic.

And then there's the dream of peace.

Today marks the 100th anniversary of the "Christmas truce" of World War I, when soldiers from both sides left their weapons in the trenches and met in neutral territory to embrace, play soccer and no doubt drink to excess in the spirit of humanity. Although the acts were officially condemned, these "live and let live" moments were repeated throughout the war.

There was no reason for those men to hate one another, let alone to start the mechanized killing that created a lost generation and ultimately left some 16.5 million dead. (In France and Germany, the countries with the most casualties, around 4 percent of the total population died. Tiny Serbia may have lost 20 percent of its people.)

Despite the occasional spontaneous truces, the killing always resumed, and real resisters were sometimes executed. That the war was one of the great failings of "civilization" is beyond question, especially since it spawned World War II, during which an estimated 55 million were killed worldwide.

But what if they gave a war and nobody came? A hundred years ago, the most viable alternative to state-declared mass killing was armed revolution, which is difficult to pull off - especially in industrialized states. One could argue that for the rulers of the imperial nations, a not unwelcome consequence of the war was to quiet the working classes' revolutionary zeal.

In the United States, voting for the left didn't have much impact: The labor organizer Eugene V. Debs ran five times for president as a Socialist, the last time from jail - where he was serving time for "sedition," that is, being anti-war - and twice (in 1912 and 1920) received nearly a million votes (more than 5 percent of the total in 1912, which makes a good argument for parliamentary-style representation). His 10-year sentence was commuted to time served as of Christmas 1921.

But nothing slowed the killing, certainly not religion. Though you wouldn't know it from the rhetoric, logic demonstrates that a benevolent God played no role. This, of course, is one of the reasons to dislike organized religion; each person thinks God is on his side. Perhaps turning the other cheek is too much to ask.

Then there's Christmas, and that odd spontaneous truce, "organized," as it were, without leadership.

What is it about Christmas that gave those men an excuse? What's a core value of Christianity that we might turn to? I asked my friend Serene Jones, the president of Union Theological Seminary and one of the few people I know who can sensibly defend Christianity. Her answer: "Christians would all say 'love your neighbor as yourself.' They just can't agree on what love entails and who your neighbor is."

The so-called golden rule - do unto others - is ostensibly a core principle of every major religion. Though it's widely ignored, we all know what love is and who our neighbors are. If every day were Christmas, if we lived as if the golden rule mattered, if every day were a truce - well, that is a reality we have never approached, but should aim for.

Is that silly? Only if you disagree with Martin Luther King Jr.: "I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality."

Everyone believes their time is the most tumultuous; for all of its challenges, ours probably is not. Violence is on the wane, there's widespread peace, abundance and progress, and the opportunities for real democracy and understanding have never been greater. If efforts toward progress seem halting, it's in part because the oligarchs running the United States and most of the rest of the world are desperate to remain in control, because progress threatens the concentration of wealth.

But if we talk among ourselves and properly love one another the best we can, we will prevail. A just and wonderful world can be ours, as long as we do not relinquish our citizenship.

The historical Jesus was a non-violent revolutionary. Let's celebrate that. And the lengthening of our days. □



North Korea and the Speech Police



ROSS DOUTHAT
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Of course it had to escalate this way. We live in a time of consistent gutlessness on the part of institutions notionally committed to free speech and intellectual diversity, a time of canceled commencement invitations and CEOs defenestrated for their political donations, a time of Twitter mobs, trigger warnings and cringing public apologies. A time when journalists and publishers tiptoe around Islamic fundamentalism, when free speech is under increasing pressure on both sides of the Atlantic, when a hypersensitive political correctness has the whip hand on many college campuses.

So why should anyone be remotely surprised that Kim Jong Un decided to get in on the "don't offend me" act?

Let's get some qualifiers out of the way. The North Korean regime is arguably more evil than any other present-day dictatorship, its apparent hack of Sony Pictures is a deadly serious act of cyberterrorism, and the response by Sony - the outright withdrawal, after theater chains balked at showing it, of the offending comedy, "The Interview," in which the North Korean dictator is blown to smithereens - sets a uniquely terrible precedent.

It's terrible for cinema, since the film industry, already wary of any controversy that might make its blockbusters hard to sell in Asia, will no doubt retreat even further into the safety of superhero franchises. More important, it's terrible for any future institution or individual hacked or blackmailed by groups seeking simi-

lar concessions.

So the Sony affair is more serious than many other debates about speech and power in the West right now. But the difference is still one of magnitude, not kind.

After all, the basic strategy employed by the apparently North Korean-backed hackers is the same one employed for years by Islamic extremists against novelists and newspapers and TV shows that dare to portray the Prophet Muhammad in a negative light (or in any light at all). And the weak response from Hollywood, where the town's movers and shakers proved unwilling to even sign a George Clooney-organized public petition pledging solidarity against the hackers, isn't so very different from the self-censorship by networks and publishers and even opera houses that have fallen afoul of Islamist sensitivities over the years.

Moreover, the demand that "The Interview" be withdrawn because it treats North Korea disrespectfully - as it most certainly does - isn't all that different from the arguments behind the various speech codes that have proliferated in Europe and Canada of late, exposing people to fines and prosecution for speaking too critically about the religions, cultures and sexual identities of others.

Nor is it all that different from the arguments used in the United States to justify canceling an increasing number of commencement speakers - including Condoleezza Rice and Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Christine Lagarde - when some hothouse-flower campus activists decided they couldn't bear to sit and hear them. Or the mentality that forced out the CEO and co-founder of Mozilla, Brendan Eich, when it was revealed that he had once donated money to a ballot initiative that opposed same-sex marriage. Or the free-floating, shape-shifting outrage that now pervades the Internet, always looking for

some offensive or un-PC remark to fasten on and furiously attack - whether the perpetrator is a TV personality or some unlucky political staffer, hapless and heretofore obscure.

The common thread in all these cases, whether the angry parties are Hermit Kingdom satraps or random social-justice warriors on Twitter, is a belief that the most important power is the power to silence, and that the perfect community is one in which nothing uncongenial to your own worldview is ever tweeted, stated, supported or screened.

And the other common thread, of course, is the pathetic response from the cultural entities that are supposedly most invested in free speech in our culture - universities, Internet companies, the press and the film industry, all of which seem disinclined to risk much on behalf of the ideals they officially cherish.

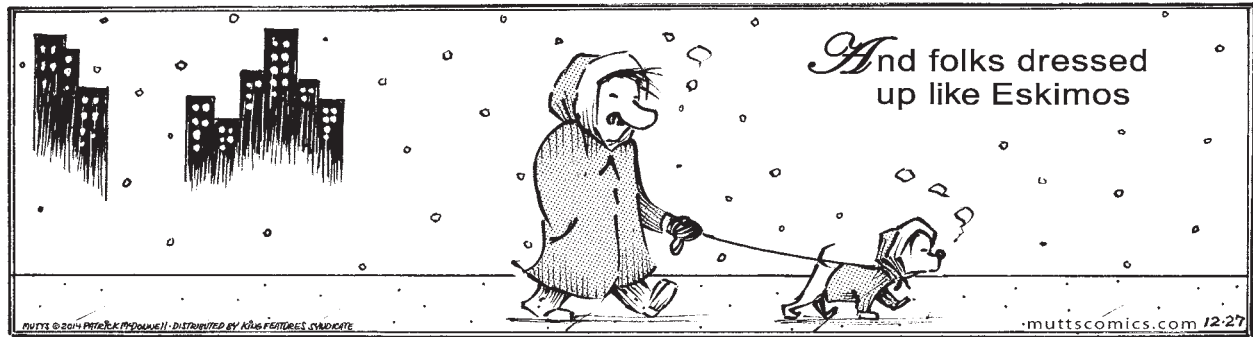
As a conservative, you take for granted that these institutions are often political monocultures - that the average commencement speaker, like the average academic, will be several degrees left of center, that Silicon Valley isn't the most hospitable place to be a religious conservative, that when Hollywood gets "edgy" or "controversial" it's usually a right-wing ox that's being gored.

But it would be far easier to live with this predictable liberalism if these institutions, so pious about their commitment to free expression, weren't so quick to knuckle under to illiberalism in all its varied forms.

"We cannot have a society," President Barack Obama said last week Friday, when asked about the Sony hack, "where some dictator someplace can start imposing censorship here in the United States."

In theory, that's absolutely right. But in practice, Kim Jong Un has our culture's number: Letting angry people impose a little censorship is just the way we live right now. □

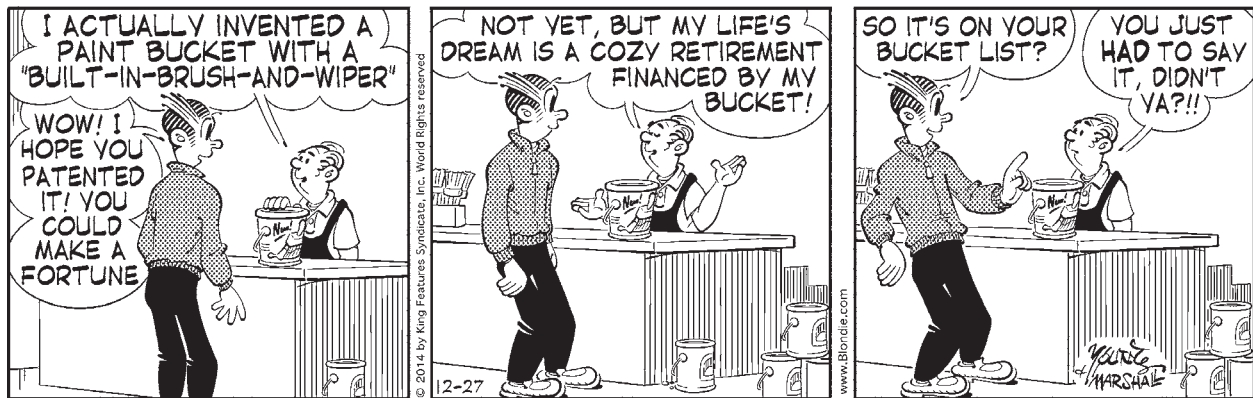
Mutts



6 Chix



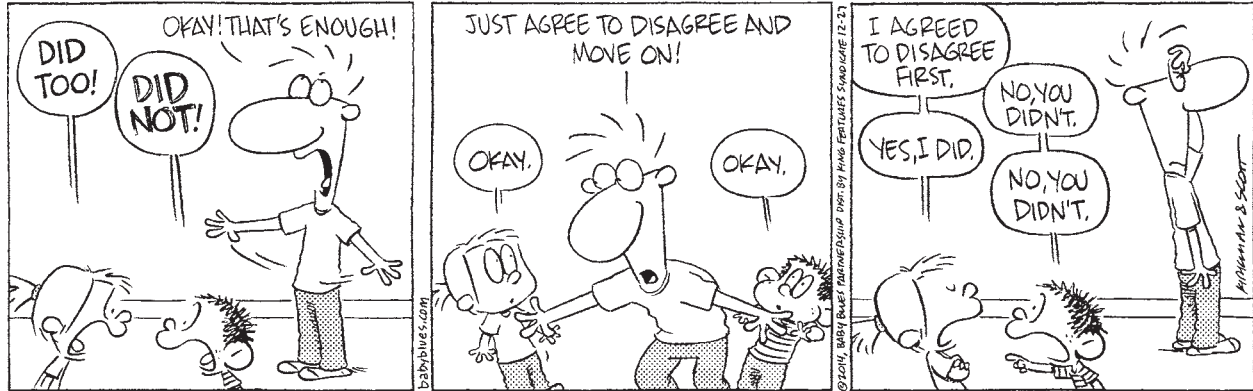
Blondie



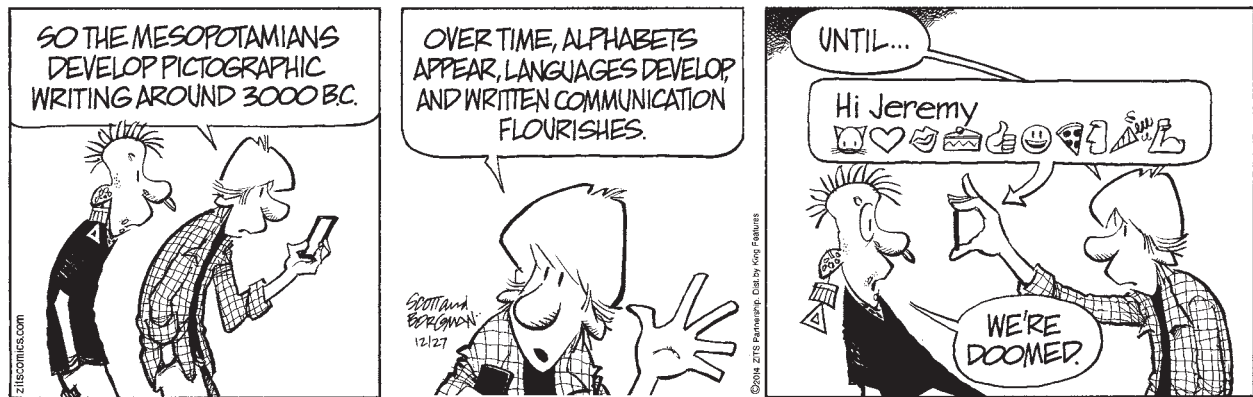
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

3	8							
			4			1		2
	5			7				
9		5	3		4			
			7		1	2		8
				2			3	
6		7			9			
							8	4

Difficulty Level
★★★★
12/27

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

5	4	6	8	7	3	1	2	9
8	7	2	1	9	4	5	6	3
9	1	3	2	6	5	7	8	4
1	9	4	6	5	2	3	7	8
2	5	8	7	3	1	9	4	6
3	6	7	4	8	9	2	5	1
6	8	5	9	1	7	4	3	2
4	3	9	5	2	8	6	1	7
7	2	1	3	4	6	8	9	5

ACROSS

- 1 Use a straw
4 One who helps you find a seat
9 Largest brass instrument
13 Sitting upon
15 "Been __, done that"
16 Primates
17 Urgent
18 __ firma; dry land
19 Actor Hudson
20 Inane
22 Maddens
23 Actor Reiner
24 Mistaken
26 Bits of parsley
29 Genuine
34 Swimming spots
35 Potato or cassava
36 Poorly lit
37 Curved edges
38 Summoned with a beeper
39 Pile
40 As busy __ bee
41 Male goat
42 Signified
43 Octopus feeler
45 Cereal grain
46 St. Joan of __
47 Slender
48 Grouch
51 Home for kids with no parents
56 " __ Mary, full of grace..."
57 Dishonest folks
58 Bookish fellow
60 Highest point
61 Group of eight
62 Long tale
63 Nuisance
64 Canary food
65 Steal from

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12
13			14		15					16			
17					18					19			
	20			21						22			
			23					24	25				
26	27	28					29	30		31	32	33	
34					35					36			
37					38					39			
40				41						42			
43			44						45				
			46					47					
48	49	50			51	52	53				54	55	
56					57					58		59	
60					61					62			
63					64					65			

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/27/14

Friday's Puzzle Solved

M	A	D	A	S		S	H	A	M		S	T	E	P
A	B	A	S	H		I	O	T	A		C	H	A	R
P	U	L	S	E		G	L	E	N		H	E	R	E
S	T	E	A	L	T	H	Y		A	D	O	R	N	S
			I	T	S		A	G	E	L	E	S	S	
W	I	L	L	E	M		A	R	E	N	A			
A	R	E	R	E	A	R	S		T	R	A	D	E	
S	O	A	R		R	U	M	O	R		S	U	E	D
A	N	D	E	S		D	E	N	I	M		N	A	G
			P	L	A	I	D		S	U	L	T	R	Y
D	I	S	T	O	R		D	E	S	I				
I	N	C	I	T	E		P	A	R	T	N	E	R	S
C	A	R	L		T	H	U	D		A	G	R	E	E
K	N	E	E		H	E	R	D		R	E	G	A	L
S	E	W	S		A	W	Y			D	R	O	L	L

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12/27/14

DOWN

- 1 Depressed
2 "It is what __"
3 Tiny skin opening
4 Says
5 Clam's home
6 In this place
30 Toe the line
31 Perfect
32 Keaton or Sawyer
33 Devoid of contents
35 Able to reach high shelves
38 Small flutes
39 __ Hermits; British band
41 Saloon
42 Primary
44 Pill
45 Explosions
47 Tear to bits
48 Fellow
49 Running contest
50 Shoots carefully
52 Texas university
53 Cracker spread
54 Equipment
55 Hence
59 Apply lightly, as finger paint

Slain Officer

Continued from page 3

"He was very even-keeled," he said. "Nobody deserves to die the way he died, especially a police officer." It was a tragedy mourners said they could not comprehend.

Ramos joined Christ Tabernacle 14 years ago. He belonged to a congregation of about 4,000 members but, said Castillo, "he was not just a churchgoer. He was an active member, a faithful member of the church."

Ramos participated in one of the church's "life groups," smaller circles of members who met once a month to socialize. But his primary role was serving in a team of ushers to welcome members, usually through three Sunday services, Castillo said.

"Our ushers are very im-

portant," Castillo said. "We tell our ushers 'The first person they see is you.'?"

Castillo said that, other than when members lost loved ones on Sept. 11, 2001, he could not think of a more personal tragedy for the church, which counts other police officers - as well as firefighters and correction officers - among its members.

Asked how members were dealing with the manner in which Ramos had died and the divisions that had ensued in the city over the protests against police brutality, Castillo said: "Our response to 9/11, to Ferguson, to Eric Garner, is to pray. We have taken our hurt and our questions and our disappointment and we go to God and we pray." □

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Scientists target mess from Christmas tree needles

By MALCOLM RITTER
AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) -- The presents are unwrapped. The children's shrieks of delight are just a memory. Now it's time for another Yuletide tradition: cleaning up the needles that are falling off your Christmas tree.

"I'm not particularly worried about it ... I'll just sweep it up," said Lisa Smith-Hansford of New York, who bought a small tree at a Manhattan sidewalk stand early this week. She likes the smell of a real tree, she said, comparing it to comfort food.

But others do mind. Consumers consistently cite messiness as one of the most common reasons they don't have a real tree, says the National Christmas Tree Association.

Keeping a tree well-watered goes a long way toward minimizing the needle problem. But beyond that, scientists are trying to find ways to make trees less messy and keep them fresh through the holidays.

IT'S IN THE GENES

Some kinds of trees, like the noble fir or Fraser fir, are better than others at maintaining moisture and keeping their needles once they're in your house, says Gary Chastagner of Washington State University. But even within a given species, some trees are better than others, he said. Needle retention is an inherited trait: if a tree does well, so will the offspring that grow from the seeds in its cones.

SEEKING THE CHAMPS

At a research station in Puy-



In this photo taken Tuesday, Dec. 23, 2014, Gary Chastagner, a Washington State University plant pathology professor, displays a cutting from a Douglas fir tree that's shedding needles at a school research facility in Puyallup, Wash. Consumers consistently cite messiness as one of the most common reasons they don't have a real tree, says the National Christmas Tree Association.

Associated Press

allup, Washington, Chastagner works to identify individual trees that hold onto their needles best. He tests branches cut early in the fall, which encourages needle loss because they haven't experienced cold weather. He lets them dry out and his team evaluates them after about 10 days, looking for branches that do not shed any needles. Needles start to fall off branches from some trees within three to five days when the branch is gently rubbed, even if they aren't dry and brittle. A poor per-

former may lose all of them within a week.

GOOD BRANCH IS GOOD SIGN

If a branch does well, it means the tree has good genetics for keeping needles. So growers can seek out seeds from those trees to produce seedlings for future planting. These progeny should do well, too. With a federal grant, Chastagner is also working with others to identify genetic markers that indicate whether a tree will resist needle shedding. That would make the tree-screening process

much faster and perhaps lead to breeding experiments to produce superior trees.

ANOTHER GLOBAL WARMING WORRY

Trees that experience warm autumns tend to have more needle loss later, Chastagner said. So if global warming leads to warmer falls in the future, it could be bad news for Christmas trees, he said. But since his studies focus on tree branches harvested before cold autumn weather sets in, they may identify trees that will do

well in a warming world, he said.

FOR NOW, WATER THAT TREE

Chastagner emphasizes that homeowners can minimize needle shedding by keeping their displayed trees well-supplied with water. In fact, when he has set up trees for research in early December and kept them watered, some species, like noble and Nordmann fir, have gone even three months with only minimal shedding. "The potential is phenomenal," he said.



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Amy Adams finds the quiet strength in Margaret Keane

LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Amy Adams didn't connect with the character of Margaret Keane when she first read the script for "Big Eyes." She cannot remember whether it was right before or right after she'd given birth to her daughter, but for Adams, who was determined to play more confident characters after she got a taste of one in "The Fighter," the story looked to her like victimization. But then she read it again, later, and everything came into focus. "Big Eyes," which opens Thursday, tells the almost unbelievable true story of one of the most commercial art movements in recent history and the deep fraud that lingered below the surface. Popular tiny waifs with big eyes were credited at the time to Walter Keane (played by Christoph Waltz), who amassed enormous wealth and

notoriety. It was later revealed the paintings were the work of his wife, Margaret, who participated in the deception for decades for her own complex reasons. "When I read it again, I didn't see her as victimized at all," said Adams. "She has this quiet strength and this complicit nature, but there was a sense of confusion. ... I think that in the beginning, it's easy to make the choices for the right reasons, but in the end to stick with the choices for the wrong reasons." Her first step, once she wrapped "American Hustle" and officially signed on to the film, was to meet the woman she'd be portraying. Adams wanted to know things that weren't in the script: Did she have siblings? What did she do when she graduated from college? What was her first marriage like? The opening scene in director Tim Burton's movie shows Margaret and her



In this Friday, Dec. 12, 2014 photo, actress Amy Adams poses for a portrait in promotion of her upcoming role in director Tim Burton's biopic film focused on Margaret Keane, "Big Eyes," in New York. Associated Press

young daughter fleeing a house and a marriage. It's a bold introduction to a character seemingly stripped of her agency for most of the movie, but, it's also one that goes unex-

plained. "I wanted to understand the woman before we met her because that would help inform everything after. I was just seeking the small details that I feel bring texture to

that sort of character," said Adams. "Even though she has a very quiet sensibility, her choices were quite bold."

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Amy Adams

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Keane is an intensely private person, though she did let the actress watch her paint in her San Francisco studio. Adams quickly realized she'd be best served by watching and observing.

"She's not the sort of person to stand up and invite you in to tell you all about herself," Adams said.

While Adams had caught on to the narrative that Margaret Keane wasn't, in fact, victimized, she was surprised to learn that Margaret shared her view.

"She still had a sense of guilt for her part in it. That was something that I really responded to because she says, 'Well, I went along with it and I did lie. A lot.' Whatever the reasons were, she still admits that she lied," said Adams. "She

felt very manipulated, but she never phrased it like, 'I don't know why Walter did this to me.' She says, 'I don't understand how I put up with this. How I went along with it for so long.'"

The voice was one of the bigger challenges. At age 86, Margaret Keane doesn't sound the way she did in her youth, so Adams had to improvise.

"I won't say who it is, but there is a woman in my life who is quiet and I'm terrified of her, and I know she's going to know who I'm talking about, but she's from Texas and she is steely strong but very, very shy, very quiet," said Adams.

"She doesn't talk loud, but boy when she talks, I listen."

Beyond a nagging hope that Margaret Keane would be happy with her performance, Adams wasn't nervous about bringing this private person to the masses. "I actually felt very relaxed. There was something about Margaret that's incredibly ground-



In this image released by The Weinstein Company, Christoph Waltz, left, and Amy Adams appear in a scene from "Big Eyes."

Associated Press

ing," she said. On the set, Burton's calmness helped, too.

"I didn't have to pretend to be anybody else," Adams said, which let her dive into the character. "I'm very confident when it comes to work." Adams,

who recently snagged a Golden Globe nomination for her work in "Big Eyes," said she tries not to think about awards while making films, or even after.

"You try to just set expectations aside and hope that people enjoy the perfor-

mance. Whatever accolades come or don't come with it, you just really hope that you've been able to communicate the character in a way the audience really responds to," she said. "That's all you can do." □

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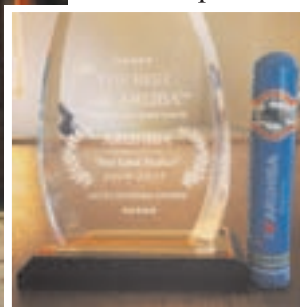


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